

THE INTELLECTUAL AS A DETECTIVE: FROM LEONARDO SCIASCIA TO ROBERTO SAVIANO

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ABSTRACT

ANGELO CASTAGNINO: The Intellectual as a Detective: from Leonardo Sciascia to Roberto Saviano
(Under the direction of Federico Luisetti)

The character of the intellectual as a detective is a recurring presence in several novels of crime fiction published in Italy from the *dopoguerra* to today. This dissertation argues that, in order to foster a reflection on the role of the intellectual in Italian society, the narrative device of characterization has been employed in connection with a historical perspective on men of letters and their social function. This study examines the detective novels of such authors as Leonardo Sciascia, Giuseppe Pontiggia, Umberto Eco, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Carlo Lucarelli, Paolo Roversi and Roberto Saviano. By looking at the transformations in the figure of the intellectual as a detective through the decades, I aim to establish a correspondence between novel and reality based on the reasons why so many men of letters have felt the necessity to fictionally represent themselves as investigators. The many episodes in Italian history that in the past decades have never been completely clarified provide the real-life background for these novels. The intellectuals are often left alone in their quest for truth, in a fictional isolation of the characters that mirrors the condition of those writers who have tried to investigate the *misteri d'Italia*.

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Introduction

The Intellectual as a Detective

My dissertation discusses the character of the intellectual as a detective in the Italian novel over the last fifty years. My thesis is that several novelists have used crime fiction in order to reflect on the social function of the intellectuals, their relationship with the institutions and their recurring condition of isolation. This study argues that the device of characterization has been employed in connection with a historical perspective on culture and its role in Italian society.

Following a trend that is common to the contemporary scholarship on the topic that I present, throughout my inquiry I will often use as synonyms terms that fall into the more general category of crime fiction, such as *giallo*, noir or detective novel, aware of the distinctions that this terminology implies. My attention will be focused on the presence of a detective whose investigation is strongly based upon an intellectual approach, regardless of the specific sub-genre in which this presence is verified.

The topic that I analyze is part of the discussion on the relationship between intellectuals and institutions in the Italian *Novecento*. Particularly after the posthumous publication of Antonio Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere* (Valentino Giarratana's edition was published in 1975), the social implications of the intellectual

activity have been considered a compelling aspect of the construction of a shared memory. Gramsci pointed out the necessity for Italy to develop a form of popular culture that would contribute to the formation of a national identity, and the *Quaderni* also offered a brief but meaningful reflection on the possibility for the detective novel to be part of this process. In reference to the attempt of men of culture to actively affect society, the position that Gramsci expressed is summarized with particular effectiveness in a 2010 article by Frank Rosengarten, "On Intellectuals, Engaged and Otherwise." As he discusses the role that Gramsci proposed for the intellectuals, no longer corresponding to a separate portion of society, Rosengarten observes:

Not only does he reject the notion that intellectuals are to be seen as a group apart from the common run of humanity in terms of how they conduct themselves in society and perform the tasks to which they are customarily dedicated; he also poses the question of intellectuals as a problem of determining the limits and the context in which they operate. He takes the position that the proper context in which to look at the question of intellectuals is the world of work, particularly as it involves the performance of tasks that, far from being in any way removed from the practical needs of society, make these needs the object of their activity. (158)

In the years directly following the Second World War, the establishment of a position of centrality for the intellectual seemed possible: especially after the fifth Congress of the Pci (1946), the independence granted to the thinkers of the Italian Left provided the opportunity for a fruitful exchange of ideas based on a plurality of opinions. As Alberto Asor Rosa remarked in his *Letteratura italiana*, precisely in "Lo Stato democratico e i partiti politici," during the *dopoguerra* writers lived in the legitimate conviction of *prendere il potere*:

Nell'impegno della letteratura a favore della politica si scorge anche un modo per dare un ruolo sociale più significativo alla letteratura, *un maggior potere allo scrittore*. [...] Il ruolo protagonista degli intellettuali,

degli scrittori, degli artisti, dei cineasti, ne viene rapidamente e fortemente potenziato. La pluralità delle posizioni, che scaturiscono dal dibattito, ha anch'essa motivazioni sostanzialmente autonome, interne ai processi di sviluppo e formazione dei gruppi intellettuali: anche se gli attraversamenti con la politica sono, come è ovvio, frequenti e vivacissimi. (572-73)

From the historical point of view, the characters that I study are the fictional representation of the end of the illusion that culture could actively affect our national history: for this reason, many of them are either defeated or experience the impossibility to reach justice, even when the investigation is successfully concluded. In this way, the intellectual as a detective becomes a tool that metaphorically represents the condition of men of culture in their pursuit of truth, and the difficulties that fictional characters face can be interpreted as a counterpart of those that real-life intellectuals have fought in their attempt to influence society.

The inclusion of crime fiction into a position of centrality in the Italian literary discussion is a recent phenomenon, specifically connected with a series of factors: editorial success has been followed by a renewed interest of the critics who, after decades of negative attitude, now acknowledge detective novels as dignified objects of analysis, particularly because they often address matters of social relevance. The commercial success of such novels as Giancarlo De Cataldo's *Romanzo criminale* (2002) and Andrea Camilleri's series of Ispettore Montalbano have contributed to the creation of a trend, as confirmed by high sales for the entire sub-genre that I discuss. Innovative views and ideas, such as those presented in Wu Ming's *New*

Italian Epic (2009), have fostered a renewed wave of respect from the critics who recognize the social impact that this movement is capable of.¹

Despite this recent surge in popularity, it should be noticed that crime fiction has been present in Italy for more than a century, in some instances producing extremely acclaimed novels that have found their space in the national canon. The tradition of the Italian detective novel includes such authors as Carlo Emilio Gadda, Leonardo Sciascia and Umberto Eco, and has recently been inherited and transformed into a strictly contemporary form by Roberto Saviano, whose *Gomorra* (2007) has astonished readers in Italy and abroad.

In addition to the relevance given to the themes presented in investigative novels, very often concerned with social denunciation, the literature of crime provides interesting reasons for an approach focused on the construction of the characters and the way they interact with each other. More specifically, the investigative novel from the *dopoguerra* to today has demonstrated a strong tendency to present characters of detectives constructed through intellectual features. The realm of the Italian crime fiction has been inhabited by several detectives introduced as intellectuals: policemen and private eyes with a remarkable ability to base their investigations on an intellectual approach are not rare in the

¹ The recent publication of two collections of essays edited by Monica Jansen, *Memoria in noir* and *Noir de noir* (2010), demonstrates that several scholars from Italian and foreign universities have reflected on how compelling the topic of crime and investigation has become in literature. A yearly conference, organized by Elisabetta Mondello and entitled "Roma noir," closely follows the variations in noir literature and often fixes connections with a broader attention to crime and investigation outside of Italy, proposing parallels with Europe and the United States.

The relevance of this recent trend in Italian literature has been highlighted particularly because of its frequent reflections on the problems of Italian society today. In the words of Giancarlo De Cataldo, what crime fiction does is "raccontare l'Italia agli italiani, al cinema, a teatro, nei libri. Chiamiamolo neo-neorealismo. Chiamiamolo new italian epic. Le etichette lasciano il tempo che trovano. Qualcosa sta davvero accadendo, è sotto gli occhi di tutti, prendiamone atto. Non stiamo definitivamente parlando di caso, ma di necessità" («Repubblica», 8/6/2008).

Italian *giallo* and the other sub-genres related to the fictional representation of crime and detection. The coincidence between characters combining intellectual and investigative qualities also recurs in the opposite direction: it is often the turn for professors, journalists or erudite Franciscan friars to act as detectives, inevitably influencing their inquiries with elements connected to their original status of educated people.²

This tendency to diversify the characterization of the main protagonist of a detective novel derives from the very nature of this kind of literature that, should it propose a repetitive pattern, would result in the continuous rearrangement of similar plots. In this sense, the proliferation of different tendencies of crime fiction that we observe today can be interpreted as the way to escape the limits that are internal to the sub-genre. Aldo Sorani already warned about this limitation in 1930, when he expressed his concerns in an article published on *Pegaso* and entitled “Conan Doyle e la fortuna del romanzo poliziesco”:

Troverà nuove formule? Si riaccenterà sempre meglio intorno all'eroe tipo e al nucleo-problema, o si ridistribuirà per i più diversi labirinti narrativi a seconda dell'inventività e della stravaganza degli autori? Io credo che le possibilità del genere siano, in fondo, assai limitate. (220)

My dissertation will focus on the recurring tendency in Italian crime fiction to combine intellectual and investigative qualities in the construction of the main character. Rather than merely discussing the many examples of educated detectives (or educated people who turn into detectives), I will concentrate my efforts on those

² In order for a novel to fall in the category of *giallo*, detective or mystery novel, the presence of a professional detective is not necessary, and I will take into consideration several works in which the person investigating a crime is not a professional. This choice is supported by the definition of *giallo* provided by Giuseppe Petronio, who refers to a general *qualcuno* undertaking the investigation in a detective novel: “[...] un romanzo o una novella gialla è il racconto, più o meno ampio e circostanziato, di un delitto, per lo più un omicidio, e delle indagini che qualcuno compie a risolvere il mistero, fino alla soluzione del caso” (*Il punto su il romanzo poliziesco* 17).

novels where the intellectual background of an investigator actually corresponds to strong, serious implications on how the character approaches detection. My method will analyze the construction of the detective through his cultural features, particularly pointing out how the setting of the novel often seems to reject the presence of an intellectual, whose figure takes shape through a process of opposition with the surrounding reality. This element recurs in all the characters that I discuss, and represents a connection between the fictional personas of the intellectuals and their real-life counterparts, the authors who created them.

A prevalent role in the structure of my study will be assigned to the network of relationships that the protagonist establishes in the novel. Secondary characters often act, along with the setting of the novel, as elements that underline the incompatibility between the intellectual/outsider and the community he tries to observe and adjust to. The methodological base for this aspect of my inquiry will be provided by Angelo Marchese's interpretation of the character as a dynamic entity, as expressed in his *L'officina del romanzo* (1983). The study of what Marchese described as the "system of characters" will be crucial for the understanding of how, in his investigation, the intellectual influences, and is influenced, by the world surrounding him.

All the novels that I take into account demonstrate a tendency in Italian literature to construct characters in a more traditional way if compared to the European trend of the twentieth century, which was distinguished by the diffusion of such devices as the stream of consciousness. As Marco Antonio Bazzocchi has observed in his *Personaggio e romanzo nel Novecento italiano* (2009), the character

and its actions are still central in the structure of the Italian novel, which is a reflection that goes in accordance with the attempt that many novelists have made in the last decades in order to combine technical innovation and accessibility of literature to a wide audience.³

Another important methodological resource will be provided by Salvatore Battaglia's *Mitografia del personaggio* (1968). In the final part of his study on the character and its transformations in the history of Western literature, Battaglia remarks how prevalent the detachment between intellectuals and society has become in the novel. This element represents an important reference to the works that I discuss, as they often express the impossibility for the intellectual to relate with the setting he acts in and, in a wider perspective, with the society around him. The distance between theory and practice in the efforts of the man of culture, so relevant in the characters that I will analyze, is expressed as follows in the words of Battaglia:

[...] l'interprete intellettuale finisce col calettare la realtà in uno schema di segni e di valori, che, pur nascendo da un'esperienza verosimile, astrattizzano la storia e introducono nella dialettica degli eventi l'equivoco di un agonismo che appartiene ad una situazione meramente mentale e di particolare momento. (523)

Battaglia underlines the isolation of the intellectual with particular reference to the relationship between the fictional representation of men of letters and the society surrounding them. In a process that is confirmed in many of the novels that I take into consideration, the separation of the intellectual from society is not always

³ For several reasons that will be addressed more thoroughly in the dissertation, the Italian crime fiction has often demonstrated a tendency to the anti-detective novel, with a detection that does not bring the assassins to justice and characters that differ from the archetype of the typical detective. Nevertheless, the expressive forms and the language chosen usually resemble "traditional" narrative, which can be interpreted in connection with the attempt to denounce the problems of society by proposing a form of expression that can be fully understood and appreciated by as many people as possible.

decided by the community surrounding the man of knowledge, but it can also be the result of his voluntary act:

S'intende che una società la quale respinga i testimoni d'intelletto e d'umanesimo, riducendo al minimo le loro possibilità d'inserimento, è sulla via dell'involuzione o quanto meno dell'arresto; ma è anche vero che l'abbandono e l'esclusione che l'intellettuale preconizza a se stesso, finiscono col costituire le prove della propria più deplorabile defezione. [...] nella società moderna, anche l'intellettuale ha continuato a presumere di costituire un proprio gruppo o ceto, immaginandosi d'appartenere ad una minoranza privilegiata, quasi per diritto ereditario. Alla fine, ha creduto di essere il depositario delle chiavi dell'esistenza e di conoscere soltanto lui, come il *clericus* medievale, la cifra e le direzioni della realtà, finché non si è visto in una posizione marginale e con scarse possibilità d'intervento diretto, confinato in una vocazione di solitudine. Egli, che in conformità alla propria mansione pensava di dirigere gli altri, s'è trovato in definitiva a sentirsi eterodiretto. (*Mitografia del personaggio* 524)

It will also be necessary to point out a correspondence between the presence of culture, embodied by the main character, and a serious reflection on the role of knowledge in society, with important implications on the plot development. Many of the novels that I discuss reproduce and take place in a realm that is entirely internal to the sphere of literature and humanistic knowledge: written texts are often the reason that drives humans to commit a crime, the weapon through which the crime is committed, the clue that helps the detective solve the investigation. The recurring presence of books in the several stages of crime and detection is also reflected in the physical locations serving as settings for the novels, often taking place in such buildings traditionally connected to culture as libraries and academic departments of Philology.

Such sources as the studies of Marchese and Battaglia, regarding the construction of the character and its network of connections with other entities in the

novel, will be accompanied by other references that are more specific to the novelists that I take into consideration. Particularly for the works of Leonardo Sciascia, three scholars have remarked how the characters of his detective novels are to be seen as fictional representations of intellectuals: Giuseppe Traina, Liborio Adamo and, above all, Claude Ambroise, who ended his *Invito alla lettura di Sciascia* (1974) with a short chapter in which he highlighted the intellectual qualities of so many protagonists in the production of the Sicilian writer.

The initial approach to characterization will be followed by more historical considerations on the reasons why real-life intellectuals have often represented themselves as fictional investigators, especially if one considers the evident metaphorical parallel between the solution of a criminal case and the quest for truth that men of culture undertake. The prominent figure of the intellectual as a frequent protagonist of crime fiction also implies an accurate analysis of the controversial relationship between the people who carry values of cultural relevance and the institutions. This aspect becomes even more meaningful if one considers that many of the authors that I study have played important roles in the public discussion on the role of intellectuals in Italy, sometimes participating in political movements and parties. On this regard, I will consider the recent publication of Ugo Dotti's *Gli scrittori e la storia* (2012), in which the author traces a parallel between the fictional representation of events and the actual historical and social conditions behind the tradition of the Italian novel.

With even more prominence, the methodological base for the historical aspect of my study will be found in Guido Crainz's *Il paese mancato* (2005), a history of Italy

from the years of the economic boom to today, which is exactly the period during which the novels that I discuss have been published. It will be particularly important to underline the considerations that Crainz makes regarding a parallel between the transformations in Italian society and the involvement of the intellectual in the public discussion. According to Crainz, the investigative function of the intellectual gained importance between the sixties and the seventies, when Italians first realized how the official history is often fallacious and easily manipulated by powerful people: it cannot be accepted without further analysis from those who have the knowledge that such task requires. The character of the intellectual/detective becomes, in this way, a necessary figure in the Italy betrayed by the lies concerning so many historical events: the leaden years, the *strategia della tensione* and the involvement of the secret services in its development, the mystery behind the tragedy of Ustica, the collusion between institutions and organized crime, the influence of foreign countries on Italian internal affairs, the expansion of criminal organizations and their transformation into modern businesses acting in the globalized economy of today.⁴

While discussing the fictional representation of intellectuals, a correspondence between novel and reality will emerge, and it will be clear how several novelists, through the characterization of the intellectual/detective, render an autobiographical representation of their own relationship with the real world. The

⁴ While my dissertation will focus on the construction of the character of the intellectual as a detective in the novel, an extremely interesting cinematic transposition of this topic is found in the journalist at the center of Marco Risi's *Il muro di gomma* (1991). The protagonists and his inquiry, based on the real story of reporter Andrea Purgatori, are presented in a very similar way if compared to the characters that I analyze, particularly those created by Sciascia: above all, the isolation of the person who wants to uncover the truth is caused by a conspiracy organized by powers that seem impossible to defy, which are elements that will recur with emphasis in the following chapters.

solitude of the characters often reflects the isolation of the authors who created them, especially in the instance of those writers who have always supported independent, controversial and polemic points of view on crucial debates about Italian history and the social transformations of the last fifty years.

It is also necessary to point out how the centrality of an intellectual character in the investigation is not unique to the Italian literary panorama, but this aspect can rather be interpreted as a step in the process of adapting crime fiction to the Italian literary production. Indeed, some of the most celebrated and successful fictional detectives in the history of the investigative sub-genre were characterized by strong elements that distinguished them as extremely educated individuals whose knowledge was functional to the solution of criminal cases. One of the most important examples is C. Auguste Dupin, the first character to base his detection on an intellectual premise. The same intellectual approach explored by Dupin would be present, with different variations, in the characters of Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown, and it would be a recurring feature of many fictional detectives of Anglo Saxon origin: as underlined by Fabio Giovannini, such characters as Miss Marple, Philo Vance and Nero Wolfe all demonstrate a strong literary background which is used in order to successfully complete the investigation.⁵

⁵ “Un ottimo continuatore del genio investigativo di Holmes era anche l'ineffabile Poirot di Agatha Christie, apparso per la prima volta in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, nel 1926. E nella stessa linea dell'investigatore «umanista» a partire dal 1930 si collocava anche Miss Jane Marple sempre di Agatha Christie, che dal giardino della sua casetta scopre i colpevoli dei più efferati delitti studiando «la natura umana». Negli Stati Uniti, intanto, gli investigatori enigmisti creati negli anni Venti e Trenta rivelavano interessi più vivaci e mondani di tanti colleghi europei. È il caso di dell'affabile Philo Vance di S.S. Van Dine: con l'immane monocolo si dichiara «investigatore per amore dell'arte». Oppure il sedentario Nero Wolfe di Rex Stout: ama la buona cucina, coltiva orchidee e, al contrario di Sherlock Holmes che si vantava di non leggere nulla di filosofia e letteratura, si dedica solo ai libri di alta cultura” (*Storia del noir* 50-51).

If the Italian crime fiction inherits this presence of the intellectual as a detective from foreign literary traditions, it also seems evident that there is an important difference that makes it independent from the Anglo-Saxon founding figures. In the classic tradition of the mystery novel, literacy and culture were functional to the eventual triumph of a philosophically positivistic approach to life. The Italian crime fiction, as we will see, uses instead the presence of extremely educated characters as a device through which to reflect on the role of intellectuals in society, an aspect that is less prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon masterpieces of the sub-genre and is quintessential of its Italian adaptation.

My inquiry will start with the analysis of the investigative novels of Leonardo Sciascia, an author whose oeuvre perfectly epitomizes all the elements that I have so far introduced. Even though *romanzi gialli* and noir were introduced in the Italian market in the decades preceding his literary production, Sciascia is recognized at the first author who succeeded in reaching editorial success by deeply addressing several issues of social relevance, at the same time analyzing the conditions that allow crime to flourish undisturbed. Despite the undeniable relevance of such authors as Giorgio Scerbanenco, before Sciascia the production of crime fiction was seen as a mere imitation of clichés created abroad and subsequently adapted to Italy. Thanks to Sciascia, the Italian detective novel presented a valuable exception to those repetitive aspects that in 1976 Umberto Eco would define as “intreccio allo stato puro: spregiudicato e libero da tensioni problematiche” (*Il superuomo di massa* 33).

What is even more relevant for my analysis is that, in the detective novels of Sciascia, the coincidence between intellectual and investigator is always prominent, and it opens several possibilities for a discussion on the author's opinion about the function of culture and its representatives in Italian society. Sciascia created characters whose analysis constitutes the core of my study because they are always introduced as intellectuals, but also because they are usually presented as incompatible with a community that does not accept or recognize their function, which is an aspect that opens the reflection on what kind of role Italian society reserves for knowledge.

Considering that Sciascia published detective novels in a range of time that spanned thirty years, it is possible to draw a precise line that traces the progressive transformation of the fictional intellectual/detective to which, I argue, corresponds the changing interpretation that the Sicilian author gave of his own role as a man of knowledge in relation to the possibility to influence reality. It is necessary to remark that the personal story of Sciascia was strongly characterized by his controversial relationship with the institutions: the writer claimed his intellectual independence even when this firm decision implied unpopular choices and caused the criticism of friends and colleagues. The characters of Sciascia all demonstrate an individualism that causes their isolation, a recurring tendency to insist on specific sets of principles even once it becomes clear that this attitude leads to defeat, and such characters can often be interpreted as the fictional transposition of their creator.

As I follow a chronological sequence, the second author that I will discuss is Giuseppe Pontiggia, with a specific attention on his investigative novel *Il giocatore*

invisibile (1978). The character of the intellectual, this time depicted in a university, (the setting he should be more familiar with), becomes critical to a metaphorical reflection on how power is administered, and how powerful people react when their authority is unexpectedly attacked and questioned. In a deeper insight regarding the nature of the text, it will be extremely interesting to discuss how the novel is built upon a continuous reflection on the role of human expression and language, and how these factors become central elements in the attempt to investigate the symbolic assassination of the professor, which corresponds to the annihilation of his certainties and beliefs on his own identity.

The characters of *Il giocatore invisibile* need to transform all the problems that they face into a matter of philology, in the attempt to transport them into the same realm of which they are specialists: only in this dimension they believe they can claim enough intellectual authority and be considered reliable. This aspect is one of the most evident examples of autobiographical element in a detective novel.

Giuseppe Pontiggia was almost obsessed with the idea of finding a way of writing that could represent as much as possible the actual reality of the things he narrated: in this novel he clearly refers to his own fixations and sarcastically discusses them in the fictional world. Because of the role that professors and universities play in society, the protagonist of *Il giocatore invisibile* will also be analyzed in his function regarding the creation of an Italian identity based on common memory and shared experience, another element that has recently been recognized as one of the possibilities that crime fiction offers.

The novel whose development is most internal to a discussion on literature, men of culture and the relationship between intellectuals and the people around them undoubtedly is Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa* (1980). Here the parallel between the typical features of detective novels and literacy reaches its apex: all the aspects of the crime can be seen as a symbolic representation of images connected to erudition and to the opposition between two diametrically different interpretations of what being erudite stands for. Once again, the figure of the main character in his implications as a detective/intellectual is shaped through the dualism with a hostile environment that becomes the symbolical representation of the literary institution, self-referential and purposefully isolated from the rest of the world.

Because of his intellectual approach to investigation, the detective of *Il nome della rosa* takes part in the crucial discussion regarding the relationship between men of culture and the masses, therefore extending into fiction the interest for a topic that Eco had addressed in several essays before he turned himself into a novelist. The opposition with the environment is implemented with the presence of a major antagonist/villain, Jorge of Burgos, whose intellectual qualities compare with those of the detective but are employed in order to fulfill opposite purposes.

My inquiry will then take into consideration several novels that fall in the category of noir literature, which carries on a different tradition if compared to the works thus far introduced. While the Italian *giallo* has typically drawn inspiration from the classic mystery tale, noir literature is more closely related to the transformation that started in the United States with the diffusion of the hard-boiled and pulp fiction. The intellectual/detective is therefore immersed in the reality of hopeless disillusion

that is typical of noir: big cities, extreme violence and perversion provide the physical and emotional setting that the detective investigates in. Because of the evident differences between Italy and the Anglo-Saxon society and judicial system, the protagonists of the Italian noir cannot be characterized with the same features as the American private eyes that are usually connected to the canonical idea of noir. For this reason, the violent macho popularized by such characters as Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer in Italy is often replaced by a parodic counterpart, and this aspect also affects the figure of the intellectual/detective that I discuss. Particularly in Carlo Lucarelli's series of Inspector Coliandro, there is the evidently sarcastic construction of an anti-heroic character whose cultural heritage does not originate in the extensive study of literature, Latin or the Sacred Scriptures (elements that were fundamental in the detectives proposed by Sciascia, Pontiggia and Eco), but is rooted instead in American action movies and mass culture. As already mentioned, the Italian noir has been at the center of the recent surge of popularity of crime fiction, and this chapter will also include references to the works of Paolo Roversi and Alessandro Perissinotto.

Chapter five will explore the possibility of a comparison between the final years in the production of Pier Paolo Pasolini and one of the most influential publications of the last decade, Roberto Saviano's *Gomorra* (2006). The construction of a character that is at the same time protagonist, narrator, author and glossator of the literary text is what makes me consider Saviano the intellectual heir of Pasolini, particularly considering the points in common between the denunciation expressed in *Gomorra* and the neglected responsibilities of powerful people

remarked in both the posthumous *Petrolino* (1992) and several articles that Pasolini published shortly before his assassination. The character of the investigator/intellectual is here charged with new responsibilities, especially concerned with the direct observation of illegal activities that are no more expressed in a completely fictional story, but are rendered through the creation of a hybrid text containing elements of novel of inquiry along with considerations on real-life characters and events. The person who carries the values of knowledge and culture becomes the direct witness of a reality that he has either thoroughly studied (this is the instance of Pasolini), or actually experienced himself (as in Saviano's novel), even when the final rendition of the story still presents fictional additions, as it certainly happens with both authors.

The conclusion of my dissertation will be focused on the explanation of how the analysis of intellectual characters in crime fiction is to be interpreted as functional to a reflection of more historical scope. It will be necessary to address the reasons why so many important novelists in the last five decades have felt the urgency to represent themselves in fiction as investigators, and to see how this decision intercepts the historical events that have characterized Italy from the *dopoguerra* to today. Even more importantly, this fictional depiction of intellectuals as detectives reflects the necessity for those who carry the values of culture and knowledge to uncover and denounce injustice for the sake of a common good. All these characters embody the function remarked by Anna Maria Ortese's in her *Il mare non bagna Napoli* (1967), particularly when the fictional alter-ego of Pasquale Prunas mentions

“il diritto della cultura a sorvegliare lo Stato, qualsiasi Stato, a contenerlo invece che esserne contentuta” (114).

It will also be compelling to verify how the several transformations of the character have become a tool in order to reflect on some of the topics that the already mentioned Antonio Gramsci discussed, and I will do so with particular regard to the characters of Sciascia. In Captain Bellodi, for example, it is possible to read a reflection on the *questione meridionale*, and the condition of Sicily can be interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the state of national affairs, a concept that Sciascia supported through the powerful image of the *linea della palma che va a nord*.⁶ In addition, the possibility to use local and regional aspects of Italian society in order to address matters of national relevance has recently been connected to the strictly contemporary noir, which creates an interesting connection between the different generations of novelists that I discuss.⁷

In conclusion, I aim to suggest and demonstrate that the narrative construction of the intellectual at the center of crime fiction needs to be discussed in

⁶ Sciascia often proposed a metaphorical parallel between the geographical conditions allowing palms to grow and an ideal line tracing the areas influenced by organized crime: according to Sciascia, both phenomena were increasingly expanding their presence in northern territories. If one considers the recent discovery of the presence of organized crime in investments and businesses in the north of Italy, this metaphor represents one of the factors that make the study of Sciascia still relevant for a discussion of the current state of Italian affairs.

⁷ In an article recently published on *Italian Studies*, Franca Pellegrini has remarked the possibility to use crime fiction in order to create examples of popular literature addressing social issues of national interest by starting from aspects of regional scope: "La penna dello scrittore, liberata dalla sacralità attribuita alla forma letteraria, si riappropria della possibilità di raccontare di sé attraverso precise coordinate spazio-temporali derivanti dal proprio vissuto. La lingua scritta può ora nutrirsi senza imbarazzi di registri alti e bassi, di virtuosismi letterari alternati al dialetto, e inglobare moduli espressivi di derivazione televisiva e cinematografica [...] Si realizza fra la fine degli anni Novanta e il Duemila una forma di romanzo, che apporta variazioni agli schemi classici del "giallo", per poi abbandonarli, ed è costruito su un tessuto narrativo a forte connotazione "nazional-regionale", per usare una formula di memoria gramsciana, alla ricerca di mediazione fra cultura alta e cultura bassa, dando vita così a una nuova forma di impegno" (126).

its *performative* implications, explaining the attempt that written expression, and narrative fiction in particular, make in order to influence reality.⁸

⁸ Throughout the dissertation I will borrow the notion of *scrittura performativa* from the use that Carla Benedetti makes of it in her *Pasolini contro Calvino* (1998), in reference to the idea that written expression can be capable of affecting the reality outside narrative fiction.

Chapter 1

The Isolation of the Intellectual in the Works of Leonardo Sciascia

Even though Leonardo Sciascia established for himself a reputation as a widely recognized man of letters, he did not always respond enthusiastically to those who addressed him as an intellectual. For example, Giuseppe Traina has pointed out how the Sicilian writer purposefully ignored the people who referred to him as an intellectual, and how he preferred to be called simply by his name, without a definition that would distinguish him as a man of culture (28). Despite this negative inclination, it seems evident how Sciascia always demonstrated a clear preference for the role of the intellectual in the characterization of many of the protagonists of his works. Among other observers, Liborio Adamo and Claude Ambroise have rightfully underlined how all the main characters in Sciascia's detective novels share the same nature of men of letters.⁹

It is exactly this peculiarity that I aim to discuss, analyzing the transformation in the figure of the intellectual/detective that goes together with the changes in the

⁹ It is certainly possible to advance the hypothesis of an autobiographical reference every time Sciascia introduces characters representing culture. Adamo finds a connection between the absence of a positive ending in Sciascia's detective novels and the impossibility of the real-life intellectual to positively fight injustice: "[...] E si potrebbe persino azzardare l'ipotesi, suffragata del resto dal contenuto medesimo dei suoi stessi romanzi, che all'impotenza, accompagnata da un preciso impegno di combattere l'ingiustizia e ricercare la verità, di Bellodi – Laurana – Rogas, nel campo della indagine giudiziaria, corrisponde quella di Sciascia" (52).

Ambroise dedicated the final part of the book *Invito alla lettura di Leonardo Sciascia* (1974) to a discussion on how several characters in the production of Sciascia are distinguished by intellectual features.

author's conviction about the possibility that erudite people can positively influence the society that they live in and criticize. Sciascia used the narrative device of the intellectual as a detective in a range of time that spanned almost three decades, from the publication of *Il giorno della civetta* (1961) to the appearance of *Il cavaliere e la morte* (1988), and it is on this period that I will put the focus of my inquiry.

It is evident that Sciascia has always depicted intellectuals that are not completely integrated in the society they live in. The characters that symbolize and carry the values of culture are often represented as misunderstood and underestimated by communities that do not recognize, appreciate or accept their role, eventually relegating them to solitude, isolation and consequently defeat. In spite of this common characteristic of all the men of culture in the detective novels of Sciascia, the condition of isolation radically changes as years go by in his production, and the same thing applies to the reaction that the intellectuals demonstrate once they realize their status of outsiders.

The first character that represents the condition of misunderstood intellectual is Captain Bellodi, the protagonist of *Il giorno della civetta* (1961). I should stress that, in this novel, the detective is introduced in opposition to the setting in which the story takes place. This opposition is of particular relevance for my study because it is based exactly on the idea that Bellodi is to be seen as an intellectual, and also because it represents a cornerstone of the discussion about characterization in Sciascia: his creation of men of culture is always based on the conflict between these characters and the surrounding environment.

The incompatibility between Bellodi and the setting of the story influences the shaping of the identity of the main protagonist, and it is a pivotal factor in the construction of this character as an intellectual. Bellodi represents culture in a microcosm, the never clearly identified city of S., where his literary background is intended as something superfluous and useless to the practical aspects of everyday life. We will also see how, through a series of sarcastic comments and digressions on the nature of the setting, the narrator is another of the several elements taking part in the opposition between Bellodi and S.

The main character of *Il giorno della civetta* is seriously focused on understanding the Sicilian customs and way of thinking, and he is driven by the sincere but also ingenuous belief that such a goal can be, at least in part, reached through the study of Sicilian literature. Bellodi acts with the conviction that literature can provide him with the knowledge and skills that are useful to eventually secure to justice don Mariano Arena and, more in general, to fight the mafia in S. If he were successful, the Captain would also uncover the increasingly threatening links that local mobsters have established with politicians and administrators of national level.

If read from the point of view of my inquiry, *Il giorno della civetta* is a novel that is focused on the impossibility to translate the theoretical knowledge of the intellectual into a tool that can be actively used in order to fight organized crime. I argue that Sciascia considers crucial, in this instance, the moment of passage from theory to practice. I also suggest that in his view the former cannot be applied to the latter by a person who has studied Sicily on books, but still lacks the knowledge that only comes with everyday experience. Moreover, it is important to remember that, in

his most famous novel, Sciascia depicts the intrusion of an outsider in a microcosm dominated by rules that often do not correspond to what is officially written in legal codes. Laws can be studied or even memorized, but the peculiar interpretation of human relationships in S. can only be understood through experience. The presence of a character whose philosophical approach to such an environment is for the most part theoretical results uncanny, and an awkward relationship is established between Bellodi and the local population. One of the consequences is that the narrator makes an extensive use of sarcasm in order to express how difficult it is for culture to find its own place in the closed-minded setting of a small town so deeply influenced by the mafia.

In order to underline the conflicting relationship between the intellectual and the Sicilian setting, it is useful to provide some examples of how the local people of S. relate themselves to culture. This opposition will eventually lead the discussion to considerations that are more specifically focused on Bellodi as an intellectual, because his characterization as an isolated, misunderstood man of culture is built through the opposition between the Captain and the people surrounding him.

A first example of the representation of the relationship between culture and S. is given in the opening sequence of the novel: a local businessman, Salvatore Colasberna, is brutally murdered right in the moment he is getting on a crowded bus. When the representatives of the law start their inquiries, they have an extremely hard time finding witnesses for the killing, in spite of the high number of passengers who may have spotted the assassin. As they look for potential witnesses, one of the *carabinieri*, Sposito, has a brilliant intuition that leads the investigation to a local

street vendor, *il panellaro*. This intuition, extremely appreciated by the *maresciallo* Antonio Ferlisi, provides the narrator with the pretext to read into Ferlisi's mind and make a sarcastic comment on the way education is perceived in S.: "Perdio: il panellaro' esultò il maresciallo, e pensò delle scuole patrie 'non lo dànno al primo venuto, il diploma di ragioniere'" (394).

In this instance the narrator participates in the creation of a setting where to find educated people constitutes an odd exception, and even a simple high-school degree can be considered as a prestigious achievement. The episode of the *carabinieri* in search of a witness is not an isolated example, as the author makes an extensive use of sarcasm in order to express the lack of education in the town of S. This element will evidently contrast with the peculiar approach that Bellodi has in mind, and will be one of the main reasons for the isolation of the intellectual. In the culturally backward environment depicted in this novel, even the mere act of writing is ideally connected with the concept of accusing: by writing, people communicate in such a way that they leave a form of evidence which can eventually be turned against them. For this reason, in S. anyone who tries to have other people write is seen under a suspicious light, and should never be trusted if one wants to live peacefully.

Let us consider the encounter between Bellodi and the relatives of Colasberna. The family evidently demands justice for Salvatore, but they are all scared to death of the consequences that may come from openly blaming the mob. These mixed feelings are reflected and confirmed in the controversial relationship that the Colasbernas have established with the act of writing. Giuseppe Colasberna

writes an anonymous letter that indicates the way to follow in order to pursue the people who are responsible for the death of Salvatore: it is necessary to investigate the family business (a construction company), and the pressures they have received to be “protected” by local mobsters, requests that they have always rejected.

From the analysis of this episode it appears evident how, as long as anonymity protects him, Giuseppe is willing to collaborate with the law, clearly moved by his desire for justice. Things suddenly change when it becomes necessary for the family to have their own words recorded in a written form. The narrator reports, with a touch of bitter mockery, the diffidence of all the characters towards the act of having their words put on paper:

Di nuovo in fila sedettero davanti alla scrivania, nell'ufficio del maresciallo: il capitano seduto nella sedia a braccioli che era del maresciallo, il maresciallo in piedi; e di lato, seduto davanti alla macchina da scrivere, c'era il carabiniere Sposito. Aveva una faccia infantile, il carabiniere Sposito: ma i fratelli Colasberna e i loro soci dalla sua presenza ebbero mortale inquietudine, il terrore della spietata inquisizione, della nera semenza della scrittura. Bianca campagna, nera semenza: l'uomo che la fa, sempre la pensa dice l'indovinello della scrittura. [...] Non perdevano di vista il carabiniere Sposito che stava, con le dita lievemente posate sui tasti della macchina, quieto ed intento come il cacciatore che, il dito sul grilletto, attende la lepre al chiaro di luna. (397)

The mockery goes on, and the uneasiness of the Colasbernas gets even worse, when they are asked to write their personal information on a register, that means to perform the so much feared act of writing in front of a witness representing the enforcement of the law: “Scrivevano come se la penna pesasse quanto una perforatrice elettrica, come una perforatrice vibrante per l'incertezza e il tremito delle loro mani” (401). It is evident how the Colasbernas instinctively establish a negative

connection between the intellectual act of writing and the law: in their mind both things are to be feared, and no good things will ever come from them.

The questioning of a key character, the informant “Parrinieddu” Calogero Dibella, provides another point of view on the act of writing and another opposition with the values embodied by Bellodi. Unlike the Captain, Dibella does not see the law as logically related to the concept of justice. According to the informer, the law is not to be found in legal codes: it is not rational and it cannot be codified once and for all. The law that Parrinieddu is accustomed to is something that depends on the particular mood of the individuals administering it; for this reason, it is a variable concept with unlimited forms and perversions. In this interpretation, the law and its enforcement are not to be connected with the rational processes of the human mind, but they rather have a relationship with the more violent and brutal instincts of human nature. The informant lives in a dangerous, liminal space between crime and justice: even though Parrinieddu is aware that violence and death can only come to him from betraying the mob, Bellodi and everything he represents do not appear less scary to him. This is how Parrinieddu interprets the presence of the Captain who tries to question him:

[...] non alzava la voce e non gli faceva pesare disprezzo: e pure era la legge, quanto la morte paurosa; non, per il confidente, la legge che nasce dalla ragione ed è ragione, ma la legge di un uomo, che nasce dai pensieri e dagli umori di quest'uomo, dal graffio che si può fare sbarbandosi o dal buon caffè che ha bevuto, l'assoluta irrazionalità della legge, ad ogni momento creata da colui che comanda, dalla guardia municipale o dal maresciallo, dal questore o dal giudice; da chi ha la forza, insomma. Che la legge fosse immutabilmente scritta ed uguale per tutti, il confidente non aveva mai creduto, né poteva: tra i ricchi e i poveri, tra i sapienti e gli ignoranti, c'erano gli uomini della legge; e potevano, questi uomini, allungare da una parte sola il braccio

dell'arbitrio, l'altra parte dovevano proteggere e difendere. Un filo spinato, un muro. (407)

Dibella's opinion on legal codes and his own interpretation of the law as a set of abstract, irrational and unpredictable rules continue the construction of a setting that cannot coexist with Bellodi. The informant fails in gaining an actual understanding of the language of the law at the institutional level, and he is certainly not presented as a refined connoisseur of legal codes. What really matters in the characterization of *Parrinieddu* is that, despite his theoretical limitations, he certainly realizes how, in the microcosm he lives in, the most important thing is to be acquainted with the practical aspects of legal matters, and to have on one's side the people who can bend the law in order to accommodate and favor your needs and convenience. The informant will eventually find the coincidence between his actions and a moral purpose only when it is clear that the mob is about to have its revenge on him: when there is nothing left to lose for him, Dibella uses the written word to do what is morally correct, as he sends Bellodi a short message containing the names of the most important local mobsters.¹⁰ Once again, written communication is seen as a form of accusation and a medium to condemn others: to write such a letter is, for Dibella, an extreme act to be performed only in the very final hours of his existence.

Captain Bellodi and his intellectual, idealistic approach to both the investigation and the new environment represent the other side of the coin we have

¹⁰ Even though Sciascia gained, particularly because of *Il giorno della civetta*, fame as an author who specialized in telling stories of mafia, it should be noticed that the topic of justice, here introduced by the reflection on the role of the informer, can be considered one of the interests that constantly recurred in almost his entire production. On this regard, several studies have been collected by Luigi Pogliaghi in *QLS 9*, "Giustizia come ossessione."

seen thus far: for him, there can be neither a practical nor a theoretical disconnection between law and justice, as the former always expresses the legitimate enforcement of the latter. There are passages in the novel where the protagonist seems to be pondering the temptation of abusing his powers in order to accomplish the results necessary for what he considers the good of the community, but he eventually decides to never give up his idealistic approach.

By analyzing the way Bellodi undertakes the detection, it seems evident that the foundations of his method hark back to the Enlightenment and the rational thought deriving from it, but it is interesting to see how, before moving from Emilia Romagna to Sicily, he has intellectually prepared for this transition. Several episodes prove how Bellodi believes that, in order to achieve serious results in the fight against organized crime, he should learn about various aspects of Sicilian literature, traditions and customs. This approach will only prove useful up to a certain extent, as it fails in the crucial operation of applying into practice the extensive theoretical knowledge that the main character has acquired.

Let us consider the conversation between Bellodi and the widow of Paolo Nicolosi. After the assassination of Colasberna, the hit man Diego “Zicchinetta” Marchica is accidentally spotted by Nicolosi. In the tradition of mafia assassinations, a potential witness can put the entire operation in jeopardy and has to be eliminated. This is exactly what happens to Nicolosi, but the damage is already done for the criminal organization: before his death, Nicolosi has the time for a final conversation with his wife, who therefore knows the identity of the killer.

In a way that resembles what happened with the Colasbernas, the widow desires justice for the death of her husband, but she is too scared of the consequences that may come from a full collaboration with the authorities. Her conversation with Bellodi is the first concrete example of how the Captain can be considered an intellectual, and how he relies on his background in the humanities as a tool through which to overtake the difficulties deriving from investigating in a society that appears so much different than the one he is accustomed to. We will see how this passage is also representative of the distance between the idealistic approach and the setting Bellodi tries to adjust to.

The questioning of the widow follows Bellodi's typical style: the Captain does not try to force the interlocutor to collaborate, but he rather wants to create a relaxed atmosphere where the widow may eventually feel more confident and willing to collaborate. Bellodi is familiar with the works of Giovanni Meli, Francesco Lanza and Ignazio Buttitta, and this proves extremely helpful for his understanding of the Sicilian dialect in the interrogation of the widow, which can be consequently performed without the intervention of a translator. Besides, Bellodi makes a series of references to such writers as Verga and Tomasi di Lampedusa, evidently with the intention of making the widow feel more comfortable and eager to speak. It is here that the intellectual approach to the investigation starts to show its limitations, as the references to Sicilian authors do not help the Captain make the widow utter the name of the hit man.¹¹

¹¹ Indeed, Verga and Tomasi di Lampedusa depicted Sicily in a way that Bellodi can actually verify as faithful to reality: the former focused his efforts on telling stories of the *vinti*, those who can never improve their social condition, while the latter explained how the island is not just geographically isolated from the rest of Italy, but is also conceptually resistant to any kind of change and

The anti-climax that derives from Bellodi's attempt to convince the widow to speak by making the conversation more and more relaxed is what eventually demonstrates the failure of his approach: annoyed by what seems to be an everlasting and purposeless effort, Ferlisi physically threatens the woman, who finally pronounces the name of the killer. This turning point suggests the idea that in Sicily the only way for the law to gain some form of respect and collaboration from honest citizens is to scare them by exploiting their own fear with methods that conceptually resemble those used by the criminals. Despite his previously demonstrated limited knowledge of literature (he mistakes Arsène Lupin for Charles Auguste Dupin), Ferlisi proves himself more acquainted with the practical aspects of law enforcement:

Il capitano guardò interrogativamente la donna. Lei fece di no più volte scuotendo la testa. Il maresciallo, con gli occhi che tra le palpebre parevano diventati due acquose fessure, violentemente si protese a guardarla: e lei precipitosamente, come se il nome le fosse venuto su con singulto improvviso, disse 'Zicchinetta'. (418)

Even though he will never change his idealistic attitude, Bellodi now realizes that fear is able to achieve the results that his approach has failed to deliver, and he starts to be doubtful on the method upon which he has based his investigation:

modernization of customs. Both elements are strongly present in *Il giorno della civetta*: the more humble people are eternally defeated by those who exercise power with violence, while *omertà* and the connections established between the mob and the political system make any attempt to change the *status quo* virtually vain. As a consequence, the intellectual arriving from the North appears to his Sicilian coworkers as naive and detached from reality, and this perception seriously downgrades his authority among them. In another ironic representation of the opposition between Bellodi and the new environment he tries to decode, the *maresciallo* Ferlisi asks himself: "Ma chi crede di essere, Arsenio Lupin?" (417), mistaking the famous thief for Auguste Dupin, the protagonist of Edgar Allan Poe's detective stories. What could have potentially been a refined intertextual connection between the novel and the father of crime fiction in the modern Western tradition is miserably ruined by Ferlisi's ignorance, although this character is only few paragraphs away from having his personal moment of glory.

si era sentito dentro, di colpo, oscuro scoraggiamento: senso di delusione, di impotenza. Quel nome, o ingiuria che fosse, era finalmente venuto fuori: ma solo nel momento in cui il maresciallo era diventato, agli occhi della donna, spaventosa minaccia di inquisizione, di arbitrio. Forse quel nome lei lo ricordava fin dal momento che il marito lo aveva pronunciato, e non era vero che lo avesse dimenticato. O soltanto nell'improvvisa disperata paura lo aveva ritrovato nella memoria. Ma senza il maresciallo, senza quella sua minacciosa materializzazione, un uomo grasso e bonario che di colpo diventa colata di minaccia, al risultato di quel nome forse non si sarebbe arrivati. (419)

It is clear how, with the creation of Captain Bellodi, Sciascia provides the reader with the representation of a man of letters who honestly tries to adjust to the local environment by using his knowledge for the good of the community, but he eventually fails in this attempt. The amount of information that Bellodi has patiently gathered by reading Sicilian literature helps the detective understand the problem of Sicilian mafia, but it also prevents him from finding a feasible solution. The intellectual is here represented as an individual who is eager to find the truth for the sake of justice, but lives in the impossibility to transform theory into something actually useful from the practical point of view. If this condition was read in its most extreme aspects related to the insistence of Bellodi in maintaining the same approach to the other characters, the Captain could even risk to be presented as a modern Quixote: his interpretation of the setting surrounding him is only effective as long as it pertains to the realm of books and theory, but is annihilated in its contact with real life.

From the intellectual point of view, the main character of *Il giorno della civetta* can also be seen as part of Sciascia's personal representation of what Antonio

Gramsci described as the *Questione meridionale*.¹² Bellodi symbolizes the intrusion of the modern, industrial and rich North into the economically and mentally backward rural South. The Captain is supposed, with his high standards of morality and faithfulness to the law and to the principles of the State, to overturn the local *status quo* ruled by corruption, fear and silent submission to crime. Considering that Bellodi is depicted as a man of letters, he is also supposed to bring culture where, as we have seen, ignorance and illiteracy are common, and a formation in the humanities is seen as naive or exotic, something superfluous that does not help satisfy the needs of everyday life.

Throughout this novel, the two separate worlds represented by northern and southern Italy are rendered with a constant opposition between culture and illiteracy. During his time in Sicily, Bellodi is surrounded by such people as Ferlisi, characterized by his awkward literary references and his diffidence in front of his commander's approach to the investigation; as soon as the Captain goes back to Parma he is presently accompanied by people who share his intellectual interests and are able to hold a conversation on Brancati, Picasso and Guttuso, while listening to refined American jazz music.

¹² "It is well known what kind of ideology has been disseminated in myriad ways among the masses in the North, by the propagandists of the bourgeoisie: the South is the ball and chain which prevents the social development of Italy from progressing more rapidly; the Southerners are biologically inferior beings, semi-barbarians or total barbarians, by natural destiny; if the South is backward, the fault does not lie with the capitalist system or with any other historical cause, but with Nature, which has made the Southerners lazy, incapable, criminal and barbaric - only tempering this harsh fate with the purely individual explosion of a few great geniuses, like isolated palm-trees in an arid and barren desert. The Socialist Party was to a great extent the vehicle for this bourgeois ideology within the Northern proletariat. The Socialist Party gave its blessing to all the "Southernist" literature of the clique of writers who made up the so-called positive school: the Ferri's, Sergi's, Niceforo's, Orano's and their lesser followers, who in articles, tales, short stories, novels, impressions and memoirs, in a variety of forms, reiterated one single refrain." Once again, "science" was used to crush the wretched and exploited; but this time it was dressed in socialist colours, and claimed to be the science of the proletariat" (32-33).

If the North is represented by Bellodi's literacy, his figure is counterbalanced in Sicily by the other character of major scope in the novel, don Mariano Arena, who is described in the words of common people as "un uomo eccezionale, vi assicuro: tanto più se si pensa che è sprovvisto di istruzione, di cultura... Ma voi sapete quanto più della cultura valga la purezza del cuore..." (433). Arena seems to take pride in his own lack of education to which corresponds, in his opinion more importantly, a thorough knowledge of how social relationships work from the practical point of view. This knowledge is functional to the preservation of the *status quo* that makes him so powerful, respected and feared among his fellow citizens, to the extent that he can consider himself untouchable: "Sono un ignorante; ma due o tre cose che so, mi bastano: la prima è che sotto il naso abbiamo la bocca: per mangiare più che parlare..." (466).

Throughout the time he spends in Sicily, Bellodi is always well aware of his condition of outsider.¹³ From this position he tries to dismantle some of the most common stereotypes on Sicily with insightful analyses of the inhabitants of the island, but he always does so from the point of view of a person who comes from the outside and cannot completely integrate in the local community. Once again, the conversation with the widow is worth citing:

Il capitano cominciò a parlare della Sicilia, più bella là dove è più aspra, più nuda. E dei siciliani che sono intelligenti: un archeologo gli aveva raccontato con quale abilità e alacrità e delicatezza i contadini sanno lavorare negli scavi, meglio degli operai specializzati del nord. E non è vero che i siciliani sono pigri. E non è vero che non hanno iniziativa. (417)

¹³ In his studies focused on the notion of character, Alessandro Iovinelli has observed on Bellodi: "il suo restava, fino in fondo, uno sguardo esterno rispetto al mondo in cui si era calato" (213).

Bellodi participates in the discussion on the *questione meridionale* with a very thoughtful reflection regarding the relationship established between Sicilians and their own families, as opposed to their relationship with the State. The Captain's opinion seems to derive from his reading of Verga, and in particular from / *Malavoglia*, in a dualism between individual citizens and Republic that resembles the one that the Malavoglias felt against the post-unity State.¹⁴ The protagonists of Verga's novel do not know anything about the needs of the recently formed Nation, which they can only see as a distant, almost immaterial entity, and the citizens of S. establish a similar relationship with central institutions.¹⁵

¹⁴ The connection with Verga opens the discussion to the sympathetic attitude that Sciascia felt for the "vinti": in his detective novels, it is the detective to lose, but with him all the masses of victims of injustice and mafia lose, as well. The interest for the disadvantaged dates back to the first production of Sciascia, as expressed in *Le parrocchie di Regalpetra*, and it fosters a sense of responsibility in an intellectual whose ancestors were part of the humblest end of the social ladder. This reflection motivates the author on the social responsibilities of a person aware of the privilege he has received, and on the consequent attempt to employ his intellectual qualities to defend the rights of those who can only be involved in the most physically exhausting activities. In the words of Sciascia: "Io penso - se fossi dentro la cieca miseria, se i miei figli dovessero andare a servizio, se a dieci anni dovessero portare la quartara dell'acqua su per le scale lavare i pavimenti pulire le stalle; se dovessi vederli gracili e tristi, già pieni di rancore; e i miei figli stanno invece a leggere il giornalino, le favole, hanno i giocattoli meccanici fanno il bagno, mangiano quando vogliono, hanno il latte il burro la marmellata, parlano di città che hanno visto, dei giardini nelle città, del mare. Sento in me come un nodo di paura. Tutto mi sembra affidato ad un fragile gioco; qualcuno ha scoperto una carta, ed era per mio padre, per me, la buona; la carta che ci voleva. Tutto affidato alla carta che si scopre. Per secoli uomini e donne del mio sangue hanno faticato e sofferto, hanno visto il loro destino specchiarsi nei figli. Uomini del mio sangue furono carusi nelle zolfare, picconieri, braccianti nelle campagne. Mai per loro la carta buona, sempre il punto basso, come alla leva, sempre il piccone e la zappa, la notte della zolfara o la pioggia sulla schiena. Ad un momento, ecco il punto buono, ecco il capomastro, l'impiegato; e io che non lavoro con le braccia e leggo il mondo attraverso i libri. Ma è tutto troppo fragile, gente del mio sangue può tornare nella miseria, tornare a vedere nei figli la sofferenza e il rancore. Finché l'ingiustizia sarà nel mondo, sempre, per tutti, ci sarà questo nodo di paura" (112-13).

¹⁵ Despite the distance between the Malavoglias and the State, Luca dies in the battle of Lissa, in a war that does not have anything to do with the interests of a family that never shows any sort of allegiance to the ideal of a national identity. The State is always considered an intruder in the reality represented by the isolated Sicilian setting and, on a closer perspective, it is an intruder in the microcosm of the family: the engine of the novel starts when the State demands that another son, young 'Ntoni, leaves the family for the four years required for the military service. This intrusion will

All these elements contribute to the interpretation that Bellodi has developed of the attachment between the individual and his family in Sicilian society:

[...] pensava il capitano, che la famiglia è l'unico istituto veramente vivo nella coscienza del siciliano: ma vivo più come drammatico nodo contrattuale, giuridico, che come aggregato naturale e sentimentale. La famiglia è lo Stato del siciliano. Lo Stato, quello che per noi è lo Stato, è fuori: entità di fatto realizzata dalla forza; e impone le tasse, il servizio militare, la guerra, il carabiniere. Dentro quell'istituto che è la famiglia, il siciliano valica il confine della propria naturale e tragica solitudine e si adatta, in una sofistica contrattualità di rapporti, alla convivenza. Sarebbe troppo chiedergli di valicare il confine tra la famiglia e lo Stato. Magari si infiammerà dell'idea dello Stato o salirà a dirigerne il governo: ma la forma precisa e definitiva del suo diritto e del suo dovere sarà la famiglia, che consente più breve il passo verso la vittoriosa solitudine. (461)¹⁶

Bellodi's literary references to Tomasi di Lampedusa and Verga find further correspondence in the way of thinking of some of the characters in the novel. The immobility of the Sicilian society and the impossibility for its masses to ever gain any form of social justice, narrated in the writings of the two authors mentioned by the Captain, are expressed in the dialogue between the representatives of two different generations of mobsters:

eventually put the family business in jeopardy, and it will consequently cause the disgrace of the family.

¹⁶ The condition of physical and intellectual isolation that characterizes Sicily and its inhabitants has been thoroughly discussed by Sciascia in "Sicilia e solitudine", the first essay in the collection entitled *La corda pazza* (1970). The following passage is particularly reminiscent of the Captain's considerations on the solitude of Sicilian people: "[...] non del mare che li isola, che li taglia fuori e li fa soli i siciliani diffidano, ma piuttosto di quel mare che ha portato alle loro spiagge i cavalieri berberi e normanni, i militi lombardi, gli esosi baroni di Carlo d'Angiò, gli avventurieri che venivano dalla "avara povertà di Catalogna", l'armata di Carlo V e quella di Luigi XIV, gli austriaci, i garibaldini, i piemontesi, le truppe di Patton e di Montgomery; e per secoli, continuo flagello, i pirati algerini che piombavano a predare i beni e le persone. La paura "storica" è diventata dunque paura "esistenziale"; e si manifesta con una tendenza all'isolamento, alla separazione, degli individui, dei gruppi, delle comunità- e dell'intera regione" (963).

‘Nel ‘27’ disse il giovane ‘c’era il fascismo, la cosa era diversa: Mussolini faceva i deputati e i capi di paese, tutto quello che gli veniva in testa faceva. Ora i deputati e sindaci li fa il popolo...’ ‘Il popolo’ sogghignò il vecchio ‘il popolo...Il popolo cornuto era e cornuto resta: la differenza è che il fascismo appendeva una bandiera solo alle corna del popolo e la democrazia lascia che ognuno se l’appenda da sé, del colore che gli piace, alle proprie corna... Siamo al discorso di prima: non ci sono soltanto certi uomini a nascere cornuti, ci sono anche popoli interi; cornuti dall’antichità, una generazione appresso all’altra...’. (424-25)

This passage highlights how, in *Il giorno della civetta*, the struggle of masses for social improvement and freedom from those who administer power through violence and fear is not only presented from the point of view of the victims, but is also explained in the words of the oppressors. The apparently everlasting condition of staleness in which the Sicilian society is stuck is expressed by Arena, when he defiantly declares “A me non vi ci porta nemmeno Dio” (470): the cultural climate of the island protects and preserves organized crime in such a way that a mobster can implicitly admit, in front of a public officer, his involvement in illegal affairs, without fearing any kind of serious legal consequences.

Unfortunately, the intention of transferring the supposedly positive values of the North to Sicily cannot be fulfilled, but not only because of the closed, narrow-minded nature of the Sicilian society that the protagonist experiences. What makes this process impossible is the influence that the mafia already exercises on national institutions: the central State and the North are not so different from the South that they would be supposed to change. It has often been remarked how *Il giorno della civetta* can be read, from the historical point of view, as a novel that depicts the crucial turning point of the transformation of Sicilian mafia from a still rural and

isolated phenomenon into a more dangerous entity with serious connections with central institutions. The impossibility to fight the mob originates in this short-circuit: the mafia is not external to the State, but it interacts with and already is part of it. This intuition, expressed in fiction by Sciascia, would later be confirmed by the several real-life investigations on the “dialogue” between State and mafia, with particular focus on the relationships that influenced the Italian early nineties, but were originally established during the preceding decades.

The attention that the author pays to this mutual interest between institutions and organized crime is also the main reason why Sciascia succeeds in the creation of a novel that starts with an episode of regional, local scope (the assassination of Colasberna), but indeed tells a story whose relevance can be felt on a national level. The collusion between State and mob is brilliantly represented by the two mysterious characters that visit the national parliament with the evident intention of convincing an influent politician to have Bellodi removed from S.: “[...] colpivano per un momento l’attenzione della gente. I più li credevano agenti di questura che stessero seguendo un borsaiolo; ed erano invece, insieme, un pezzo di questione meridionale” (473).

It will be this complicity between crime and institutions to eventually prevail over Bellodi’s efforts. With a touch of sad irony, the accusatory scheme proposed by Bellodi is dismantled by the same recourse to the crime of passion that the Captain had cleverly analyzed and ruled out. In the reality represented in this novel, even when a crime of passion does not actually take place, it is still imprinted in the mind of Sicilians. According to Bellodi, Sicilians recur to this pretext in order to resolve a

juridical matter by alienating reason, denying the empirical evidence of a fact, so that they get lost in that meaningless realm in which law exists *per se* and not as a reflection of justice:

Il delitto passionale, il capitano Bellodi pensava, in Sicilia non scatta dalla vera e propria passione, dalla passione del cuore; ma da una specie di passione intellettuale, da una preoccupazione di formalismo, come dire?, giuridico: nel senso di quella astrazione in cui le leggi vanno assottigliandosi attraverso i gradi di giudizio del nostro ordinamento, fino a raggiungere quella trasparenza formale in cui il merito, cioè l'umano peso dei fatti, non conta più; e, abolita l'immagine dell'uomo, la legge nella legge si specchia. (460)

Once again, Bellodi is trying to deny the stereotype of the jealous Sicilian who tries to fix a problematic marriage with violence, pointing out how this archetype is often exploited by the mafia in order to blame local customs instead of the mobsters.

Despite all his efforts focused on the understanding of the Sicilian reality and the attempt to adjust to it, Bellodi is always considered by the local people as “uno di quei settentrionali pieni di pregiudizi” (410), and has to acknowledge the impossibility for his intellectual approach to achieve serious results in changing society.

Moreover, the incompatibility between character and setting reflects the idea that Sciascia wants to render about the man of culture: the intellectual is left alone, surrounded by people who either cannot understand him or do not share his own values. It does not happen by accident that, for the entire period necessary to the investigation, Bellodi is totally dedicated to the cause of justice, and is depicted as a character who does not get involved in any kind of sentimental or social relationship

that is not directly related to the investigation.¹⁷ When he is not trying to change society, the intellectual is instead able to maintain and enjoy social relationships, just like the main character does as soon as he returns to Parma.

It is interesting to observe the mechanism behind the relationships that the detective establishes with the other characters during the investigation. Bellodi is the protagonist of the novel, but it should be pointed out how don Mariano Arena is the focus on which all the action is eventually referred to, and how all the characters participate, in different ways, in the attempt to prove him guilty.

With the obvious exception of the anonymous characters secretly plotting to prevent Bellodi from convicting Arena, all the actors in the novel are used by the Captain in order to achieve his goal, and it is possible to divide the characters in three main categories. The first category comprises those characters that obviously help Bellodi in his quest: Sposito, Ferlisi and the other *carabinieri*. The relatives of the victims, specifically Nicolosi's widow and the Colasbernas, belong to an intermediate group: they want justice to prevail, but they do not openly endorse the efforts of Bellodi, affected as they are by the influence of the criminal mindset based on *omertà*. The third group is made of those characters that belong to the criminal structure but are, in spite of their will, used by Bellodi for investigative purposes. More specifically, this third category is formed by Parrinieddu, Zicchinetta and Pizzuco. We have seen how Parrinieddu lives on the edge between crime and law, and how Bellodi exploits this character's position of privileged observer in order to

¹⁷ This aspect of the characterization perfectly reflects the classic canon of detective novels as fixed by S.S. Van Dine in his *Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories*: "There must be no love interest. The business in hand is to bring a criminal to the bar of justice, not to bring a lovelorn couple to the hymeneal altar".

gather precious information on how the mob organizes its business. The instance of Zicchinetta and Pizzuco is different: they are framed, once again, by the written word, manipulated by Bellodi in such a way that they accuse each other, after the investigators redact a false accusatory statement which convinces each criminal that he has been betrayed by the accomplice.

This episode provides one of the many examples that have brought scholars to refer to Sciascia's investigative stories as anti-detective novels. Indeed, the archetypical opposition between characters representing good and evil is not reflected in the opposition between truth and falsity: in this specific instance, it is the "good" character who exploits his superior intellectual qualities with a lie in order to have the criminals confess. Bellodi is here modifying his use of the plausibility of the written word in such a way that resembles what A.J. Greimas defined as "discursive manipulation:"

If truth is no more than a meaning effect, we can see that it is produced through the exercise of a particular kind of practice, a causing-to-appear-to-be-true. This constructs a discourse whose function is not truthsaying but rather seeming-to-be-true. As in the case with plausibility, this seeming no longer seeks appropriateness via-à-vis its referent, but rather trust on the part of the receiver it addresses. It wants the receiver to read it as being true. In turn, the receiver's trust can be acquired only if it corresponds to his expectations. That is, the construction of the simulacrum of truth is greatly conditioned, not directly by the axiological universe of the receiver, but by the sender's view of what the axiological universe is. He is the master manipulator, responsible for the success or failure of his discourse. (*The Veridiction Contract* 657)

Indeed, this is the only instance in which Bellodi does not follow his unbreakable moral standards and prefer to make use of deception. The positive

results that come from this technique further condemn the Captain's idealistic approach: he can be successful on the practical side only when he puts his well-behaved nature aside. In the kind of reality that the novel explores, intelligence and cleverness cannot be used by the authorities to improve the moral habits of Sicilians. They should rather be used as tools to deceive and defeat an enemy that, on its side, behaves without any consideration regarding the moral appropriateness of human actions. Bellodi's discursive manipulation comes from his desire to get Mariano Arena arrested, and this intention is so strong that it makes the detective temporarily suspend his allegiance to his principles and become a little more "human," vulnerable to his own ambition and desire for justice. At the same time, this interpretation reinforces the scope of the character of don Mariano, who is the object of the detection but can also be considered as the engine that generates all the action in the novel.

It is very interesting to see how the text itself provides the reader with a schematic reduction of the relationships that connect the characters involved in the process of detection, in such a way that it becomes possible to have a visual idea of the connections between different factors. When two anonymous characters discuss a plan that would set don Mariano free from any accusations, they represent a hierarchy of the elements to be considered. This hierarchy is visually reduced in the shape of a chain:

"Il problema è questo: i carabinieri hanno in mano tre anelli di una catena. Il primo è Marchica: riescono ad afferrarlo così saldamente che è come uno di quegli anelli murati nelle case di campagna per attaccarci i muli... [...] Ed al suo anello ha attaccato anche quello di Pizzuco... Ora i casi sono due: Pizzuco parla: ed ecco saldato al suo il terzo anello, che sarebbe Mariano; Pizzuco non parla: resta attaccato

a Mariano, ma debolmente, che un buon avvocato non faticherà molto per staccarlo, e... e basta: finisce la catena, Mariano è libero.” [...] “E allora prendi nota del mio consiglio: bisogna tirare dal muro il primo anello, bisogna liberare Diego.” (457-59)

If one imagined Arena as a fixed point, *Il giorno della civetta* could also be represented as the attempt that Bellodi performs to walk the line separating himself from the mobster. The problem for the investigator is that, whenever Bellodi gets closer, Arena is able to make the efforts of the Captain vain and to restore the original distance: it does not matter how hard Bellodi tries, don Mariano cannot be caught. This truth is presented as self-evident, and the intellectual fails to recognize it as such. Similarly to what happens in other novels written by Sciascia, common sense would discourage any attempt to move accusations against the mobster, who is perceived by the people around him as untouchable. According to the local way of thinking, the detective is foolishly trapped in his own stubbornness and does not want to accept the evident truth:

noi stiamo parlando di don Mariano... Un dito addosso a don Mariano non lo mette nessuno: uomo rispettato, uomo protetto, uomo che può pagarsi la difesa di De Marsico, Porzio e Delitala messi assieme... Certo, soffrirà di qualche scomodità: la camera di sicurezza non é il grand hotel, il tavolaccio é duro, il bugliolo fa venire la nausea; e gli mancherà il caffè, poveretto, che ne beveva una tazza ogni mezz'ora, e fortissimo... Ma tra qualche giorno lo rimettono fuori, illuminato d'innocenza come un arcangelo Gabriele: e la sua vita riprende sesto, i suoi affari continuano a prosperare. (458-59)

The depiction of the detective as the only character who actually believes that something can be done in order for the *status quo* to collapse is also a reflection of the loneliness that for a long time has distinguished those who have been trying to

challenge the mafia dominance alone, without an actual help from the State and the central institutions. Once again, this consideration intercepts the characteristics of the detective as an intellectual.

As Bellodi goes back to Parma he is forced to observe, from an external point of view, the destruction of his accusatory discourse. When his friends ask him to find a proper way to define and explain Sicilian mafia to them, the Captain demonstrates his intellectual qualities by recurring to a refined allegory. The story that closes the novel is about a doctor who rebels against the injustice inside the penitentiary system, where the mobsters have managed, without a proper medical justification, to reside in the infirmary, in order to receive a better treatment. The doctor is not only beaten up by the mob: he is also abandoned by the same institutions that are supposed to stand by honest citizens, but that instead consider them as stubborn and foolish whenever they interfere with the business of dangerous and influential people. By recurring to this rhetorical device, Bellodi summarizes his entire experience in Sicily: the story of the doctor is the story of the Captain himself. The intellectual/detective is left alone by the same institution that he proudly serves and represents, and his pursuit of truth for the sake of justice cannot be successful: even though he can reach the former by solving the riddle, he can never achieve the latter, as don Mariano Arena gets away with his criminal deeds.

Whereas Bellodi is moved by his firm belief in a logic connection between law, truth and justice, the intellectual at the center of *A ciascuno il suo* (1966) is of a certainly different nature. This novel develops around the investigation on the killing of two friends, Dr. Roscio and the pharmacist Manno. The murder takes place after

an anonymous letter of warning is delivered to Manno, and this letter is the starting point for the investigation undertaken by professor Laurana.

Laurana evidently lacks the scope and the rigorous method of his predecessor. Albeit unsuccessful in his efforts, Bellodi always demonstrated a clear vision of the game he was playing, and remained strictly faithful to a set of behavioral rules that transmitted to the reader an idea of competence and high moral standards. Bellodi would not let the chance have any role in his investigation; he would not let his emotions mislead him, and he would not fall for an attractive woman, letting his personal feelings prevail over the priority that is the investigation. The intellectual of *Il giorno della civetta* followed a precise method and, regardless of the success of his operation, Bellodi was a character of relevant scope. The same considerations cannot be proposed for the analysis of Laurana, and this element is probably caused by the very nature of his characterization: the intellectual at the center of the investigation in *A ciascuno il suo* is not a professional, and he is not bound by the same behavioral commitments that one can observe in Bellodi.

In particular, what makes Laurana different from Bellodi is the very premise behind the decision to undertake the investigation. What for Bellodi was a moral matter of supreme justice becomes, for Laurana, a purely intellectual exercise. The investigation becomes an act of curiosity that entertains the boring life of a man of letters who unconsciously suffers for his condition of dissatisfied scholar whose cultural interests do not make him popular among his fellow citizens.

From the psychological point of view, Laurana wants to prove himself that he is worthy of something more than the low professional and social recognition he has

received in his life, and this act of ambition will cause his ruin. The social commitment that constantly moved the intentions of the intellectual in *Il giorno della civetta* is totally absent in *A ciascuno il suo*: throughout this novel there is a recurrence of situations pointing out very clearly how the premise behind Laurana's detection is not to be searched for in social justice.

A first evidence of this detachment between the intellectual and the attempt to positively influence society can be found when the main character of the novel is introduced by the narrator. This introduction provides an accurate description of Laurana's interests, reputation and social status, and an important portion is reserved for the emotional outcomes that the professor has experienced after his decision to undertake the detection:

[...] Ma da questo stato d'animo si astraeva, o almeno credeva si astraesse, la sua curiosità riguardo alle ragioni del delitto: che era puramente intellettuale, e mossa da una specie di puntiglio. Era, insomma, un po' nella condizione di chi, in un salotto o in un circolo, sente enunciare uno di quei problemi a rompicapo che i cretini sono sempre pronti a proporre e, quel che è peggio, a risolvere; e sa che è un giuoco insulso, un perditempo: tra gente insulsa e che ha tempo da perdere: e tuttavia si sente impegnato a risolverlo, e vi si accanisce. Infatti l'idea che la soluzione del problema portasse, come si dice, ad assicurare i colpevoli alla giustizia, non gli balenava nemmeno. Era un uomo civile, sufficientemente intelligente, di buoni sentimenti, rispettoso della legge: ma ad aver coscienza di rubare il mestiere alla polizia, o comunque di concorrere al lavoro che la polizia faceva, avrebbe sentito tale repugnanza da lasciar perdere il problema. (*A ciascuno il suo* 808-09)

While the previous quotation would already provide enough evidence of the lack of interest that Laurana feels about the possibility to be socially committed for the sake of justice, what strikes the most is that Sciascia keeps underlining this

attitude in a way that, because of the frequency of the repetitions, cannot be considered accidental or of secondary importance.

When Laurana tries to realize who, among the notable people in town, could be corrupted to such an extent that he can have his influence felt all over the province of Palermo, the professor holds a conversation with the priest of Sant'Anna. The high number of potential answers makes it impossible for the two characters to find a solution, and the insistence of Laurana makes the priest suspicious about the reason why the professor is even posing the question. Laurana explains that he is in no way attempting to undermine the *status quo* or the relationships of power that run the illegal affairs in the province:

“Problema insolubile, a quanto pare.” “Eh sì, insolubile: gliel’ho detto prima... Sono troppi, troppi, più di quanto possa credere uno che non sta nello stesso formaggio... Ma lei, mi scusi, quale interesse ha, a risolvere questo problema?” “Curiosità, semplice curiosità...” (836)

This continuous stress on the idea that the criminal case is solely an intellectual exercise, a brainteaser for those who do not work in the summer and need to occupy their spare time, is repeated later on in the novel. After Laurana begins his investigation with enthusiasm and the sincere hope to solve the mystery, he finds himself in a situation of staleness, and is no longer positive about the opportunity of pursuing the fixed goal. As the summer comes to its end and the new academic year approaches, the daily routine of the high-school professor is about to start over again, and for the first time Laurana is doubtful about his actual intention to find the responsible for the death of Roscio and Manno. A matter of supreme justice would be considered a priority and would prevail, but once again the

protagonist treats his involvement in the case as strictly personal, something that depends on his individual will and is only meant to entertain him: “Al punto in cui era arrivato, altro non c’era da fare che lasciar perdere, non pensarci più. Era stato un passatempo da vacanza; e piuttosto insensato, per la verità” (838-39).

It becomes more and more evident how Sciascia, in this novel, has depicted a character whose interest in the solution of the case is more a challenge against himself rather than a pursuit of justice. This detached attitude is confirmed by the consideration that Laurana has of those who run and enforce justice:

Ma lui, Laurana, era lontano dalla legge, e da coloro che dall’autorità della legge erano investiti, più di quanto Marte sia lontano dalla terra: e poliziotti e giudici appunto vedeva in fantastica lontananza, come marziani che ogni tanto si materializzassero nell’umano dolore, nella pazzia. (859)

The intellectual at the center of *A ciascuno il suo* does not believe that he should jeopardize the regular course of his repetitive lifestyle with an intrusion in the world of law and justice. According to Laurana, the State stipends some people to have its revenge on those who offend and break the rules of society; the other citizens should neither interfere with, nor participate in, the official investigations. The professor does not reflect upon the actual absence of any serious intervention from the State when it is necessary to fight organized crime: for him, policemen and magistrates get paid to pursue criminals, and common citizens have the right to feel exempted from any active participation involving a personal risk. The fear of a potential revenge from the assassins is not even very strong in this character, whose attitude derives more from a matter of principle. It is this conviction in the separation

of roles in society that makes Laurana decide that he should not share his discoveries with the representatives of the law:

Più che la paura, che dal ricordo di come Roscio e il farmacista erano finiti a volte gli si insinuava portandolo, anche automaticamente, a precauzioni che gli evitassero la stessa fine, era una sorta di oscuro amor proprio che gli faceva decisamente respingere l'idea che per suo mezzo toccasse giusta punizione ai colpevoli. La sua era stata una curiosità umana, intellettuale, che non poteva né doveva confondersi con quella di coloro che la società, lo Stato, salariavano per raggiungere e consegnare alla vendetta della legge le persone che la trasgrediscono o la infrangono. (860)

Captain Bellodi was one of the people that Laurana would expect to undertake the dangerous activity of fighting organized crime. He did so not just because he received a salary, but because he felt a moral obligation towards what he considered good. The bond between him and the State was not a mere matter of economic reward: it involved and demanded his sincere feelings of allegiance and respect. It is evident how, in *A ciascuno il suo*, the reader finds a completely different character: the intellectual is not at all interested in the possibility of influencing society, but he rather creates a world for himself, in which the intellectual ability is used egoistically as a form of pastime.

The condition of isolation that entangles Laurana provides another opportunity for a parallel with the already discussed isolation of Bellodi. The Captain was an outsider trying to influence the new setting he was sent to. His failure came primarily from his inability to transform his theoretical knowledge of Sicily into something more useful from the practical point of view. This impossibility was evidently connected to Bellodi's external origin: he was not born and raised in Sicily,

and he failed in fully understanding the mechanisms behind the behavior of the local citizens, honest and not. He was an intellectual that, despite his limitations, truly believed in an ideal commitment to social justice and to the improvement of the condition of those who suffered the brutality of the mob.

The position of the intellectual in *A ciascuno il suo* is that of the isolated outsider, too, but with a fundamental difference that makes this condition even worse: Laurana is not an outsider in a new setting, but he experiences isolation in the same place where he has always lived. In this novel, Sciascia represents the impossibility for the intellectual to be an active part of his own community, and he does so with an extremely long series of consideration on Laurana, his role as an intellectual and his relationship with his fellow citizens. Investigating is presented as useless: if one only demonstrated to be familiar with the mentality of the small town, it would have been extremely easy to realize the truth behind the killing of Roscio and Manno. For this reason, when Laurana starts his private investigation, he actually believes that he is about to undertake a long and difficult process, but the truth is instead that “Non c’era uno del paese che non avesse già, per conto suo, risolto il mistero; o che si ritenesse in possesso di una chiave per risolverlo” (794).

It is interesting to see how many aspects of Laurana’s personality, and consequently the reasons for his isolation, are presented not through the actions of the protagonist but through the opinion of the other characters and of a sort of *vox populi*, something that resembles the construction of the characters in Giovanni Verga’s *I Malavoglia*. Laurana’s condition of unfulfilled scholar is explained through a consideration of how his fellow citizens ignore and disregard the articles that the

professor publishes: “Non faceva lezioni private, nemmeno nell’estate, stagione in cui preferiva impegnarsi nei suoi lavori di critica letteraria che poi pubblicava in riviste che nessuno in paese leggeva” (806).

This quotation suggests that the papers that Laurana publishes may or may not be relevant from the scholarly point of view, but what emerges is that, regardless of the scientific value of his research, nobody in town is interested in his literary efforts. This lack of interest creates a fundamental separation between the man of letters and the people surrounding him, who do not demonstrate any involvement in intellectual activities: they are considered as purposeless and disconnected from the actual reality of the town.

The irrelevant value that Laurana’s research has in the microcosm of his hometown goes together with the reputation he has developed. The professor is not despised in his role of high-school teacher, but he is never presented as fully integrated in the life of his town. The others recognize his qualities of honesty and kindness but, at the same time, they cannot help noticing that the professor is characterized by something unusual and different from the norm:

Paolo Laurana, professore di italiano e storia nel liceo classico del capoluogo, era considerato dagli studenti un tipo curioso ma bravo e dai padri degli studenti un tipo bravo ma curioso. Il termine curioso, nel giudizio dei figli e in quello dei padri, voleva indicare una stranezza che non arriva alla bizzarria: opaca, greve, quasi mortificata. (806)

His repetitive, boring lifestyle and his odd, misunderstood behavior have caused for Laurana a condition of isolation, of a stranger in his own original environment. This isolation is increased by the professor’s choice to live with his mother, a character who is caring and protective but even more smothering, as her

presence limits any ambition that the professor may have regarding the idea of marriage and the establishment of a family of his own. The sum of all these elements has caused Laurana to live an existence that never seriously intercepts the lives of the other citizens in the not specified Sicilian town in the province of Palermo: “Con questo carattere, e nella condizione in cui viveva, non aveva amici. Molte conoscenze, ma nessuna amicizia” (807).

The reputation of outsider that the town has built for Laurana is exemplified in his conversation with the widow of Manno. The woman cannot bear the suspicions about her late husband’s devotion and faithfulness, and she wants to move the public attention to the family of the other victim, the Roscios. As she tries to present her truth as self-evident common knowledge, she does not appear surprised when Laurana does not understand her position. In her mind, as in that of all the other citizens, the intellectual lives in a parallel world made of books, absorbed in his studies, and this condition prevents him to have an actual knowledge of the facts of everyday life:

“Ci conosciamo tutti, mi creda” lo interruppe la Manno. “Lei, si sa, è un uomo che si occupa soltanto dei suoi libri...” quasi con disprezzo. “Non ha tempo per occuparsi di certe cose, per vedere altre cose: ma noi” si rivolse per intesa alla vecchia signora Laurana “noi sappiamo...” “Sì, sappiamo” ammise la vecchia. (813)

This depiction of the main character as naive and detached from the events that go on around him is presented over and over again in the novel. Sciascia operates with the clear intention of representing an intellectual who does not understand the psychological mechanisms that run his place of origin. The professor constantly misunderstands and is misunderstood, and this condition is the engine

that moves his efforts throughout the investigation: he tries to prove to himself that his fellow citizens are wrong, that he is not a person of mediocre intelligence and is therefore worthy of respect.

The examples of this alienation continue. During the conversation with the priest of Sant'Anna, one possible name emerges as a potential notable person who is in charge of the illegal traffics in the province: Rosello, the lawyer. Once again, the doubts that the professor expresses make the other character point out how far from the reality and the affairs of the town the intellectual is:

“Limitiamoci al paese” disse Laurana. “Rosello, l’avvocato Rosello.”
“Impossibile.” “Impossibile che?” “Che sia lui.” “Che sia lui a
corrompere, a rubare, a intrallazzare?... E allora, mi scusi, debbo dirle
che lei campa con la testa nel sacco”. (833)

It is the old mother of Laurana who explains the mentality of the fellow citizens to her son. Despite his almost forty years of age, the professor has failed to decode the reasons behind the behavior of the close-minded people of his small hometown. The letter at the origin of the story is meant to lead the investigation towards a false clue, that Dr. Roscio is not the real target of the assassination: if one believes the letter, Roscio dies because he happens to be hunting with Manno at the moment he is shot. This is what Laurana believes until his mother points out that, because Roscio is dead, his widow could finally fulfill the dream of her lifetime: she can now marry her cousin, the lawyer Rosello, without carrying the shame of abandoning her husband.

The fundamental difference between the outsider and the person who demonstrates to be familiar with the customs of the town is all represented in the conversation between Laurana and his mother. The old woman knows how to play

this dangerous game, as she gives her son a hint of the truth by presenting it just like a possibility that comes from her fantasy: she never forgets that it must be the other truth, the one that has been established by the community, to be publicly stated and accepted if one does not want to experience serious troubles. The mother's reasoning process is that of a whole town in which everyone suspects the truth, but no one is willing to actually pursue or denounce it:

“E se questi due, che si amavano sotto il tetto dell'arciprete, avessero continuato ad amarsi anche dopo il matrimonio di lei? E se ad un certo punto avessero deciso di togliersi dai piedi Roscio?” “Non può essere” disse la vecchia. “Il povero dottore, si sa, è morto per causa del farmacista.” “E se invece il farmacista fosse morto per causa di Roscio?” “Non può essere” disse di nuovo la vecchia. (864)

Throughout the novel, Laurana never shows the same precaution that his mother and the other citizens use. Everyone in town knows the solution of the riddle, but they keep it for themselves. Laurana acts in the opposite way: he does not discover the truth (at least he does not so until a late stage in the story), and is naively willing to admit the progress he makes little by little, so that many people realize that he is involved in a private investigation independently developed from the one undertaken by the authorities. This total lack of practical sense and respect of the rules of *omertà* will cause the ruin of the professor. It will not just be a physical death, but the death of Laurana's attempt to improve his own intellectual reputation. Indeed, in the memories of his acquaintances, he will always be remembered as a fool, a “cretino” (877), for his inability to handle the consequences of the dangerous game he has started. Because this naive behavior is a distinguishing feature of his personality, professor Laurana is the quintessential example of the characters that

Peter and Jane Schneider define as “almost asking to be made the victims they became” (253), and particularly his infatuation for the widow is an unforgivable mistake that helps the plotters.

A ciascuno il suo also offers the possibility to reflect on the interaction between intellectuals, whereas *Il giorno della civetta* portrayed Bellodi as the sole representative of culture in an intellectually backward society. Scholars have traditionally put much importance on the conversation between Bellodi and Mariano Arena: this much discussed passage has consequently enjoyed an enduring popularity from literary critics and the public, at the same time granting the protagonists their presence in the imagination of generations of Italian readers. I have already discussed how this conversation can be interpreted as the opposition of two different ways to intend life and relations of power. What is introduced in this conversation is the comparison between Bellodi, a character representing culture, and Arena, who represents a more practical set of skills, directly connected with the knowledge of the setting that is the microcosm of S. In the discussion about the intellectual as a detective and the role that culture plays in Sciascia’s novels, the conversation between Laurana and the character of Benito is of equal relevance.

As Laurana travels to Montalmo in order to meet an old friend, the professor accidentally makes the acquaintance of Benito, his friend’s older brother. The character of Benito, an eccentric and very straightforward intellectual, is constructed through the exaggeration of some of the aspects that distinguish Laurana.

Whereas the professor struggles for a better recognition from his fellow citizens, Benito never leaves his extraordinary library precisely because he has seen

enough of the world outside. Benito is the protagonist of an important turning point in the depiction of intellectuals in the novels of Sciascia: it is no longer society to isolate the intellectual, but the man of culture now rejects the contact with the outer world. For the first time, the reader can see in the intellectual a sense of superiority that comes from the awareness of his own culture: after Bellodi and Laurana, Benito can be seen as the third link in the chain that represents the increasing level of incompatibility between intellectuals and society, which is a tendency that will reach even higher peaks in *Il contesto* (1971) and *Todo Modo* (1974).

If Laurana is viewed by his fellow citizens as odd and difficult to relate to, Benito is considered insane, arguably as a consequence of his eccentricity. This element is presently faced by Laurana as soon as he arrives to his friend's house:

“ “Si accomodi, venga: non tarderà molto, a tornare.” Si voltò a fargli strada; e appena si voltò la cameriera fece a Laurana un movimento con la destra all'altezza della fronte, come di spirale. L'inequivocabile significato del gesto fermò Laurana. Ma senza che si fosse voltato, senza voltarsi, l'uomo disse “Concetta la sta avvertendo che sono pazzo” [...] “Concetta mi considera pazzo; e non solo lei, per la verità” ” (*A ciascuno il suo* 846)

As the conversation develops, it becomes clear that Benito is not insane, but is considered as such particularly because of the state of isolation he has decided for himself. The external world has decided for Benito the reputation of crazy old man, just like it has established that Laurana is an odd person. This process of characterization through what the community thinks about an individual is extremely similar to what happened in many of the stories written by one of the authors who fascinated Sciascia the most: Luigi Pirandello. Laurana himself participates in this typical construction of the identity of the “other,” particularly when he finds a natural

connection between Benito's laughter and his alleged madness. As pointed out in Michael Foucault's *History of Madness*, the insane is, for those surrounding him, to be feared because he carries a knowledge that is unknown, impossible to grasp and consequently terrifying (40).¹⁸

Sciascia represents, through the character of Benito, an intellectual whose condition of man of letters has turned him into a misanthrope, bringing him to a total rejection of a society that he does not recognize as civilized and worthy of any kind of appreciation. Benito does not want to have anything to do with the external society in general, and with Sicily in particular. This kind of intellectual despises the world outside, and takes pride in his privileged condition of finely educated man, a state that he considers the main reason of opposition between himself and the average people outside his house.

The status of man of culture is also symbolically expressed through the presence of a library that suffices Benito in order to live without any interaction with the others, in a reclusion that is caused by his sense of superiority towards the world outside. This is how Benito describes his own condition of voluntary isolation:

“Non esce mai di casa?” “Mai, da parecchi anni... Ad un certo punto della mia vita ho fatto dei calcoli precisi: che se io esco di casa per trovare la compagnia di una persona intelligente, di una persona onesta, mi trovo ad affrontare, in media, il rischio di incontrare dodici ladri e sette imbecilli che stanno lì, pronti a comunicarmi le loro opinioni sull'umanità, sul governo, sull'amministrazione municipale, su

¹⁸ Particularly in the Middle Ages, the mentally insane were physically deported to places where they could no longer represent a threat to society. As remarked by Salvatore Battaglia in his study of the character throughout the centuries of Western Literature, *Mitografia del personaggio*: “Nel Medioevo i folli erano allontanati dalla città e dall'abitato; ma per evitare che rientrassero o eludessero la vigilanza dei lazzaretti, era costume imbarcarli per poi lasciarli su rive lontane, o addirittura in balia delle onde, esponendoli a sicura distruzione. Tra il demente e il mondo degli uomini si frapponeva una distanza invalicabile, che doveva immunizzare per sempre dal contatto. La difesa era il mare” (144).

Moravia... Le pare che valga la pena?" "No, effettivamente no." "E poi, in casa ci sto benissimo: e specialmente qui dentro" levando le mani ad indicare ed accogliere tutti i libri d'intorno. "Bella biblioteca" disse Laurana. (848)

The isolation that Benito has decided for himself does not prevent him from having a peculiar idea on the condition of Sicily and its future. Instead of living in a condition of detachment from the state of public matters, the intellectual in isolation has developed a clear, bitter understanding of the problems and priorities of the island. The sad picture that comes from Benito's reflection even brings the intellectual to interrogate himself on the opportunity of spending one's energies in order to solve a case of murder, when the condition of Sicily does not offer any future for its inhabitants, in such a way that the lives of them all are metaphorically at risk:

Mezzo milione di emigrati, vale a dire quasi tutta la popolazione valida; l'agricoltura completamente abbandonata; le zolfare chiuse e sul punto di chiudere le saline; il petrolio che è tutto uno scherzo; gli istituti regionali che folleggiano; il governo che ci lascia cuocere nel nostro brodo... Stiamo affondando, amico mio, stiamo affondando... Questa specie di nave corsara che è stata la Sicilia, col suo bel gattopardo che rampa a prua, coi colori di Guttuso nel suo gran pavese, coi suoi più decorativi pezzi da novanta cui i politici hanno delegato l'onore del sacrificio, coi suoi scrittori impegnati, coi suoi Malavoglia, coi suoi Perolla, coi suoi loici cornuti, coi suoi folli, coi suoi demoni meridiani e notturni, con le sue arance, il suo zolfo e i suoi cadaveri nella stiva: affonda, amico mio, affonda... E lei ed io, io da folle e lei forse da impegnato, con l'acqua che ci arriva alle ginocchia, stiamo qui ad occuparci di Raganà: se è saltato dietro al suo onorevole o se è rimasto a bordo tra i morituri. (851)

Despite his hypothetical state of madness and his feeling of aversion towards society, Benito is the intellectual that, among the ones we have encountered thus

far, seems to have the most lucid idea on the actual state of the Sicilian condition of abandonment. Sciascia represents here a man of letters whose isolation has given him the possibility to see the world from a privileged perspective: unlike Bellodi, Benito is free from the naive conviction that mentioning the literature and the visual art that the island has produced can help improve its sad situation. At the same time, his monologue demonstrates how concerned he is with the issues regarding social justice not only in Sicily but in the whole country, as proved by his reference to the tragedy of Vajont, and this attention to what is just or not makes Benito different from Laurana, as well.

The tendency to focus on novels whose scope is not confined to the problems of Sicily would be confirmed in the publications that came in the early seventies, *Il contesto* and *Todo modo*. In both novels, the attention is put on the secret aspects behind historical events and on the corruption of the entire political system. Sciascia undertook this operation by treating all the political parties with the same accusatory intention, which caused him much criticism, particularly from the more radical area of the Italian Left.

The character of intellectual/detective continues the process of transformation that I have presented so far. The idea of social commitment changes to the point that the intellectual/investigator becomes assassin himself, in what Giuseppe Traina has described as “il gesto individuale di ribellione di chi, scoperta l’invincibile trama del potere omicida, optava per il ruolo di privato giustiziere” (65).

Il contesto (1971) tells the story of a series of murders involving influential judges in a not clearly identified country that clearly resembles Italy. What inspector

Rogas believes to be the revenge of a man who has previously been the victim of misjudging is exploited by the representatives of power in order to hide a coup d'état. This story unveils the complete lack of trust that Sciascia has developed toward the national institutions, and it confirms the well-known negative opinion that the author always had about the *compromesso storico* between the Christian Democracy and the Italian Communist Party. The plot develops around a protagonist that is characterized in a way that reminds the reader of the other detectives discussed thus far. Rogas is depicted, in his work environment, as the only person who has a certain familiarity with literature, and he is therefore appointed to investigate on the potential involvement that a political publication could have in the murders. These peculiar cultural interests make Rogas different from his coworkers, who look at him with a bitter sense of superiority that, once again, is introduced by the narrator through a sarcastic description of how a man of letters feels displaced when surrounded by the forces of public security:

Lei è quasi un letterato. Con tono che voleva essere cattivante ma lasciava trasparire scherzo e disprezzo: ch  Rogas aveva quella malafama, tra superiori e colleghi, e per i libri che teneva sul tavolo d'ufficio e per la chiarezza, l'ordine e l'essenzialit  delle sue relazioni scritte. Che erano talmente diverse di quelle che da almeno un secolo circolavano negli uffici di polizia da far risuonare spesso il grido – ma come scrive, costui? – oppure – ma che dice, questo qui? – Si sapeva, poi, che frequentava qualche giornalista, qualche scrittore. E frequentava gallerie d'arte e teatri. (*Il contesto* 42)

Rogas accepts the title of man of letters only in spite of himself, especially considering how *Il contesto* also represents a strong statement against the falseness of some intellectuals. In particular, those who are connected with the magazine “Rivoluzione permanente” are presented as spoiled, childish and quarrelsome, and

are more concerned with the construction of a certain image for themselves rather than the defense of the proletarian class. They are also judged guilty for purposefully delaying any serious revolutionary attempt, as all they do is accusing each other for conducting a bourgeois lifestyle. All these defects are reassumed in the poem that Nocio has secretly composed. As the poet submits his creation to the attention of Rogas, it becomes clear how the novel has introduced two categories of intellectuals: those who actually dream of the revolution and those who, like Galano, simply exploit this idea in order to gain fame and consent.

In the vortex of violence and falsity in which the story takes shape, the relationship between the intellectual and the State is radically transformed. Bellodi embodied a naive faith in the same institution that was preventing him from fulfilling his duty, while Laurana demonstrated a detachment from any kind of social commitment. Benito had already started a process of voluntary isolation from society, but Rogas is the first intellectual who puts himself in an actively dualistic opposition with the State: "In pratica, si trattava di difendere lo Stato contro coloro che lo rappresentavano, che lo detenevano. E bisognava liberarlo. Ma era in detenzione anche lui: non poteva che tentare di aprire una crepa nel muro" (66).

The ultimate solution for Rogas is to implicitly support Cres in his revenge against the injustice perpetrated by the State: when the investigator recognizes the identity of the disguised assassin, who now goes by the name of Ribeiro, he does not go after him for the arrest. This extreme decision of non-interference comes, first of all, from the hatred that Rogas has developed against the corrupted institutions. It is also influenced by a more practical consideration: if he actually arrested Cres, the

assassin would be released, because the State purposefully wants to perpetrate the insecurity of the citizens by exploiting the fear of anarchism. In his study on *Il contesto* and *Todo modo* as examples of irony and parody, Attilio Scuderi has underlined this episode as a turning point after which, he suggests, the detective acquires a double identity and becomes the other side of the coin if compared to Cres, the assassin:

L'assassinio del Presidente, ad opera del farmacista-killer Cres, segna una evoluzione del personaggio: agevolando l'opera dell'assassino, ma in uno stato di ironica incoscienza, - "come un sonnambulo" - egli ne diviene il perturbante alter-ego. (*Lo stile dell'ironia* 41)

In such a scenario, the role of the intellectual is doomed to an isolation that brings to death, as perfectly rendered in the interview released by one of the investigators, Doctor Blom: " "il mio collega era, tra noi, considerato uomo di elevata cultura". Con una leggera smorfia: quasi che all'elevata cultura toccasse alla fine, inevitabile, il colpo d'arma da fuoco" (*Il contesto* 86).

Il contesto narrates a separation between intellectual and State that is now extremely serious and impossible to fix, and this element is ironically underlined by the narrator that, describing the funeral service in honor of Rogas, uses the expression "povero Rogas" not because of his violent death, but because he is being honored by "poliziotti e bandiere," representatives and symbols of a State that the detective did not believe in anymore. From the point of view of the construction of the character, even the funeral confirms how Rogas does not have an identity outside of the investigation, and how his identity totally overlaps his role as a detective: there is no mention of his family at the funeral, only elements related to his professional position are described.

The presence of the intellectual returns with even more prominence in *Todo Modo* (1974). The coincidence between intellectual and detective is here verified in the character of the painter, unreliable narrator who participates in the investigation for the crimes committed in the hermitage of Zafer. The protagonist is disgusted by a society that has lost any kind of decency and self-respect, and whose misery is epitomized by the paradoxical participation of corrupted politicians in a series of “moral exercises” of religious nature. The transformation of the role of the intellectual in the works of Sciascia reaches here its extreme stage: culture is intended as a way to create a common understanding between two characters that are aware of their privileged condition of educated people. The painter and don Gaetano communicate in a world of their own, in which there is no possibility that other characters can ever take part in their exchange of ideas. This aspect of how the two intellectuals conceive their status is cleverly represented in the plot. During one of the conversations between the painter and don Gaetano, they are joined by four of the priests present at the hermitage. The two protagonists demonstrate their condescending attitude regarding others by abandoning the discussion, that they do not consider worthy of their attention precisely because of the intrusion of other characters, not capable of holding a useful, logic exchange of opinions:

Si accese una discussione che la partecipazione degli altri quattro preti subito confuse, aggrovigliò. Lasciammo, don Gaetano ed io, che si sbrigliassero: ognuno a dire la sua senza minimamente far conto di quella degli altri; e, finito il pranzo, li lasciammo che erano quasi arrivati agli insulti. (113)

The process of characterization that started with Captain Bellodi and his attempt to include others in his reflections on Sicilian literature becomes, in *Todo*

modo, an ethical and philosophical discussion that cannot involve the participation of the masses of citizens. The intellectual has erected a wall between himself and the rest of society, and culture is intended as a reason for pride and for the conviction that the man of letters knows best. For this reason, despite the evident differences of opinion on various aspects of life, the painter and don Gaetano always show a mutual respect from the intellectual point of view, which is exemplified in the recognition of each other as privileged interlocutor. The result is not an effort to change what is wrong in society, but an open attempt to destroy it through the physical elimination of its corrupted representatives.

In *Todo modo* the condition of isolation of the intellectual is expressed right away, and not through the filter of other characters. The protagonist/narrator opens his recollection with the clear awareness of his solitude: “non avevo né un programma né una meta (se non quelle, fortuite, delle ore dei pasti e del sonno); ed ero solo” (102). Even more importantly, the painter is not alone against his will, but he is fascinated and attracted by the condition of solitude and separation from the rest of society. This attraction is clearly demonstrated when he intentionally turns his car around in order to reach the hermitage of Zafer, a place of retreat, and when he gives a description of what he expects from such a place:

L'eremo è un luogo di solitudine; e non di quella solitudine oggettiva, di natura, che meglio si scopre e più si apprezza quando si è in compagnia: un bel posto solitario, come si suol dire; ma di quella solitudine che ne ha specchiato altra umana e si è intrisa di sentimento, di meditazione, magari di follia. (102)

Inside the hermitage, the separation between the protagonist and the notables hosted at Zafer is nicely rendered from the symbolic point of view, since the

painter and the cook are the only characters that do not actively take part in the rituals, as they put themselves in a position of external observers to the circle that is formed. This attitude is the symbol of the main difference between the intellectual narrated by Sciascia in the sixties and those who are the protagonists of the novels of the seventies. The characters that carry the values of culture, now tired of being ignored and underestimated, reverse the situation and reject any involvement with a society that does not deserve their respect. This inversion of tendency, which started with the turning point represented by Rogas's decision to let Cres have his revenge, brings to the consequences that emerge in *Todo Modo*: don Gaetano arguably attacks the representatives of the institutions, but the painter kills don Gaetano because this character symbolically embodies the mutual convenience established between State and Church.

The ministers, lawyers and notables who have gathered at Zafer are punished for the corruption in their personal life as well as in the management of the Republic. Don Gaetano, who would certainly have the education and intelligence to distinguish himself from this immorality, has instead decided to exploit it in order to concentrate in his hands the power that comes from the reverence and respect that politicians pay to him.

The result is a merciless analysis of the relationship between State and Church, in a situation in which no one can be considered external to a system based on the logic of personal profit and corruption. The decadence of the institutions has not put them in jeopardy, but it seems to have become the most important pillar of the system. It is this hopeless condition that moves the intellectual to undertake what

Traina called the act of a “privato giustiziere.” Olivia Barbella, too, has underlined how the polemic intention and the act of aggression against those who manage power could only result into a form of violence (159).

This voluntary attempt to put a distance between the intellectual and an entire world of corruption demonstrates that already at this stage, in the intention of Sciascia, the character that carries cultural values has matured that total lack of trust, if not toward the idea of institution itself, certainly toward those who administer and direct the State with illegal and immoral means. This attitude would emerge with always increasing prevalence in the years to come, until it ignited the furious polemics connected first to the silence, and then to the famous declarations of Sciascia about the kidnapping and the assassination of Aldo Moro. As Emanuele Macaluso remarks in his book *Leonardo Sciascia e i comunisti* (2010), the leitmotif of the controversies that usually followed the words of Sciascia was the antagonism, if not with the State *per se*, with a certain administration of it:

...nelle polemiche che Sciascia conduce, non solo su mafia e antimafia, ma sul terrorismo, le Br e lo stato, non c'è mai equidistanza e neutralità, ma il convincimento, su cui certo si può discutere, che “questo stato” non ha la forza politica, l'autorità morale e la credibilità per chiamare i cittadini a combattere. (38)

The tendency to a voluntary isolation that the intellectuals demonstrate in the novels written by Sciascia in the seventies, as opposed to the initial attempt to positively influence society in the previous works, finds a real-life correspondence in what the author wrote in one of the articles collected in 1982 with the title *La palma va al nord*: “Vent'anni fa credevo fosse possibile che il mondo cambiasse: ora non ci

credo più" (159).¹⁹ A further confirmation of this tendency came in 1987, in a long interview with French scholar James Dauphiné; Sciascia made it clear how, in the final part of his career, he felt far from interpreting the role of the committed intellectual, because that role now implied a partisan acceptance of political positions.

In the eighties Sciascia introduced yet another detective characterized by intellectual qualities: the Deputy ("Il Vice") of *Il cavaliere e la morte* (1988). The construction of this character follows a method that, at this stage, we can consider typical of the style of Sciascia, as the identity of the protagonist is once again strictly connected with his cultural background. The opposition with the people surrounding the main character is first of all based on the Deputy's passion for a painting by German artist Albrecht Dürer. The painting has accompanied the career of the Deputy for many years, but it has constantly been ignored by the people walking into his office. The reputation of the Deputy among his colleagues is badly influenced by his cultural interests, and is a source of diffidence. Because of the stubbornness that moves the Deputy in his intention to incriminate the powerful Aurispa, the investigator is accused of lacking practical sense, an accusation that we have seen as a recurring element in the production of Sciascia:

"Le conosco, le sue curiosità: sono di un genere così sottile che nemmeno si vedono". "Una ragione di più per soddisfarle". "Eh no! Non le vedo e non le vede ogni uomo di senso pratico". (418)

¹⁹ This collection contains several articles that are to be considered as extremely useful tools in order to understand the positions that Sciascia stood by in a period in which he was very often at the center of animated polemics concerning different aspects of the Italian society. Particular relevance is given to the assassination of Aldo Moro, to the controversial relationship between Sciascia and the Communist Party, and to his increasing dissatisfaction with the representative of the institutions. In a statement that evokes the condition of the protagonists of his detective novels, in one of these articles Sciascia declares: "Mi sento molto isolato come scrittore e intellettuale." (*La palma va a nord* 230)

In addition, in this novel it is possible to find frequent accusations against the Deputy because, according to his Chief, he tries to solve cases in real life with the same methods adopted by the detectives of the fictional world. There is the impression that, if we concentrate our focus on the characterization of the Deputy as an intellectual, *Il cavaliere e la morte* re-presents a well-known pattern, which is common to the production of Sciascia, and for the first time it does not include pivotal changes in the construction of the character. It is evident that in this novel the real transformation of the character involves not his status as an intellectual, but a series of reflections on such topics as death, which the author was feeling as close and would have come to him in 1989, shortly after the publication of *Il cavaliere e la morte*. This aspect confirms that the apex of the detachment of the intellectual from society is to be found in *Todo Modo*.

Thanks to the analysis of such characters as Bellodi, Laurana, Benito, Rogas, the painter and the Deputy, it has been possible to trace the various stages of the opinion that Sciascia developed on the isolation of the intellectual in the Italian society. If one considers that, besides the characters that he created in his detective novels, Sciascia turned himself into a detective for his writings on other “isolated” individuals such as Raymond Roussel, Ettore Majorana and Aldo Moro, the coincidence between culture and the isolation of the intellectual seems to be even more pivotal in the production of the Sicilian writer. All the characters that Sciascia presents in his production of detective novels live a condition of isolation that can be either voluntary or imposed. In their autobiographical reference to the author, they are examples of what Massimo Onofri mentions as “isola-individuo,” a condition of

stubborn individualism that they pursue even when it implies defeat or death.²⁰ It is through these characters that the author expresses the sympathy felt for those who, thanks to their knowledge and intelligence, stand among a majority of people who lack their own ethical standards, in what Onofri defines as “esclusiva predilezione da parte di Sciascia dei suoi figli d’eccezione, quelli che sovrastano tutti gli altri per rigore morale e senso della dignità” (48-49).

At the same time, the transformation discussed so far suggests different possibilities for the interpretation of the role of the intellectual in the works of Sciascia. The analysis of how the device of characterization expresses the distance between intellectuals and Italian society is very important, but a more historical perspective is also necessary for a deeper understanding of the reasons why depicting intellectuals as detectives has become so frequent in Italian fiction. The production of Sciascia is helpful for this discussion especially because it spanned from the sixties until the eighties, years that redefined Italian history, culture and the role of the intellectuals in their relationship with society. It is important to point out how all the detectives created by Sciascia experience peculiar moments of Italian history through three decades, and it becomes necessary to understand all the adjustments that intellectuals made in order to face the changes in society.

Both the protagonists of the novels published in sixties, Captain Bellodi and professor Laurana, live in the fictional representation of the Italian economic boom and its contradictions: while the industrial cities of the North are characterized by their industrial expansion and attract millions of newcomers, the rural South seems

²⁰ Ugo Dotti, too, in his *Gli scrittori e la storia* (2012), refers to Captain Bellodi’s efforts as a form of “enorme, solitario e faticoso lavoro” (283).

to be abandoned to itself, as the economic growth of the Nation does not affect positively the Sicilian setting of the novel. In particular, the arrival of Captain Bellodi in Sicily could even be seen as the intromission of a character that, although coming from the same country, lives in a condition that is comparable to that of a foreigner. In a sense, Bellodi is an educated, “civilized” character that deals with a still “archaic” realm in which the written laws accepted by the national institutions are redefined, especially when they interfere with a part of the country that has not been positively affected by the economic growth and the social transformations that it implied.

Il contesto and *Todo modo* depict the intellectuals in their attempt to relate with the period that followed the economic boom: the years that saw the spiral of the *strategia della tensione*, during which the Italian people realized for the first time that the institutions were not immune from involvements in secret and illegal affairs, and that the official canals of information should often be questioned and considered unreliable. The illusion of serious improvements in society that had been at the center of the years of mass movements between the sixties and the seventies drastically comes to an end, and the total impossibility to pursue his investigation against powerful people is the natural consequence for the Deputy of *Il cavaliere e la morte*, which was published in the eighties.

This historical scenario, upon which Guido Crainz has focused his book *Il paese mancato* (2003), is central to the discussion on the intellectual as a detective in the novels of Sciascia. This background works as a real-life setting for the fiction of Sciascia precisely because, as a consequence of the secrets that Italians have

been kept from through the decades, men of letters have been forced to turn themselves into investigators, in an attempt to shed light on the ambiguous relationships that official institutions have established with organized crime, secret societies, political extremists and foreign governments. It does not happen by accident if the work of Crainz intercepts very often the topics presented in the fiction of Sciascia. If, in the sixties, the most evident struggle is the one suffered by those immigrants who moved to the industrial cities of the North, the historian does not forget to underline the evident contradiction of two countries established in one, the first living years of economic expansion and the second being completely excluded from this process. Crainz remarks how this division would be peculiar of the years to come, too, and referring to the year 1970 he warns about the condition of the Italian Mezzogiorno: “all’ombra dei campanilismi e dei rancori contro la «politica» vi è qui la disperata sensazione di una distanza crescente e quasi incolmabile dai poli dello sviluppo” (381).

Crainz connects different episodes of Italian history with reflections on the words of the most important intellectuals of the time, and the production of Sciascia is very often mentioned as capable of catching the peculiar changes in politics and society. This connection is especially established in reference to the seventies, with such works as *Il contesto*, which is particularly meaningful for the understanding of the leaden years and the *strategia della tensione*, and *Todo Modo*, which highlights the failure of the entire leading class that decided the destiny of the Nation for such a long time.

If analyzed from this point of view, the isolation of the detective/intellectual narrated by Sciascia is representative of the isolation suffered by those who, from the economic boom until the eighties, tried to uncover and denounce the many mysteries connected with several historical events in Italy, and the fictional transformation of a character increasingly detached from the rest of society finds a historical correspondence that cannot be ignored.

Chapter 2

The Man of Letters as a Metaphor: Giuseppe Pontiggia's *Il giocatore invisibile*

The figure of the intellectual as a detective is at the center of *Il giocatore invisibile* (1979), the novel that, after his controversial participation in the Italian *neoavanguardia*, granted Giuseppe Pontiggia recognition and popularity among the public. With the publication of this novel the author finally transitioned to the more linear and traditional expressive ways that he had always felt inclined to, and that represented one of the strongest points of disagreement with the colleagues of *Gruppo 63*.²¹ In the main character, an anonymous professor who tries to figure out the identity of a mysterious enemy, it is possible to discern what ideas Pontiggia wants to express about the relationship between men of culture and the pursuit of truth, as seen through the particular perspective focused on the microcosm that is an academic department of philology.

These premises certainly result functional to a metaphoric interpretation of the novel and its characters. While the professor and his colleagues can be seen as indicators of the condition of the Italian educational system, the protagonist

²¹ After its foundation in 1956, Luciano Anceschi's literary journal "Il Verri" became a precious opportunity to give voice to those young writers who no longer identified themselves within the traditional canons of Italian literature. During a first stage, Pontiggia was seriously involved in this experiment of Neo-Avant-Garde, and published his first works on "I quaderni del Verri." One important source on the relationship between Pontiggia and *Gruppo 63* is Maccari, Giovanni. *Giuseppe Pontiggia*. Fiesole: Cadmo, 2003.

represents a person who has always considered himself in a position of unchallenged power: Pontiggia tries to answer the question arising on how power reacts when it is attacked and put in jeopardy, as previously hidden forces interfere with the *status quo*. *Il giocatore invisibile* is also a novel on the nature of truth and the wrongful convictions that humans build in order to avoid the consequences of a reality that is often too hard to be accepted. In addition, the study of the *professore* implies a thorough reflection on the importance of human expression, and the use of oral and written language in connection with the process of uncovering truth.

It is important to remember how much attention Pontiggia always paid to the role that humanities could play in contemporary society, an aspect that certainly results from the author's strong background in classic literature: one of the consequences that will emerge from this discussion is that, in *Il giocatore invisibile*, Pontiggia makes extensive use of techniques and devices that are typical of the detective novel in order to reflect on what being an intellectual is like in the Italian 1970s.²²

The plot starts with the publication of a polemic attack on the literary journal "La parola agli antichi": an anonymous author criticizes the incorrect interpretation that the professor has given about the etymology of the word "hypocrite." It becomes clear that from its beginning the novel develops in a realm that is to be considered internal to what refers to culture and academia, and not only because of its setting: the metaphoric weapon used to perpetrate the crime is a letter and, because of the

²² The extreme attention that Pontiggia reserved to humanistic culture is a leitmotiv in the memories that friends and colleagues have of the late Lombard writer. For instance, Gino Ruozzi remarks that Pontiggia's relationship with books was so intense that his house, as its primary function, served as a continuously expanding library. This latter aspect establishes a connection between the author and many of the characters presented in his production (*Pontiggia contemporaneo del futuro* 143).

specificity of its content, the “assassin” has to be an intellectual, and more specifically a scholar. Because of the particular bitterness expressed by the author of the letter, it also appears evident that the attack is not only moved on the professional level, but it also originates from implications concerning private envies and rivalries. The only people who belong to the category of the scholars and could also be motivated by personal reasons are those who share their everyday routine of work with the professor: his colleagues, who all suddenly become potential enemies in the mind of the protagonist. In this situation, the professor is a victim who turns himself into an investigator in order to figure the identity of the person who has murdered his beliefs by insinuating a series of doubts on both his professional competence and private respectability.

The analysis of the main protagonist is an essential tool to understanding the role that culture is assigned in this novel, and how its function is explained by intercepting the characterization of the professor. The main character leads a repetitive life: having reached a professional position that grants him the respect and, to some extent, the fear of those around him, he is no longer attracted by the idea of experimenting anything new, and he certainly does not expect his authority to be questioned.²³ The attack that the professor receives carries effects that make all the vulnerability of the victim visible: he becomes obsessed with the negative repercussions that the letter could have on his reputation, and discovering the

²³ Even though *Il giocatore invisibile* presents many aspects of the Anti-detective novel, the repetitive life of the professor and his initially strong self-confidence construct the premise for a classic mystery novel: they are that *status quo* that the “crime” has modified and the investigation is supposed to re-establish.

identity of the author of the letter becomes the eventual goal of all the actions of the protagonist.

The potential consequences on the respectability of the professor make him ignore the most important question he should have been focusing on: regardless of the mysterious identity of his enemy, does the letter contain a legitimate criticism on his interpretation of the etymology that is in discussion? In other words, is the professor acting so desperately because he has been proved wrong in his own field of specialization, or because he cannot conceive and accept the idea of being put under attack? The wife of the protagonist is the first character who tries to have the professor answer these questions and face his intellectual responsibilities:

Lei si aggiustò la rivista sulle ginocchia e riprese a leggere. Alla fine alzò gli occhi: Ma è vero? Che cosa è vero? Quello che dice la lettera. Il professore posò il bicchiere sul lavandino. Sei la prima che mi fa una domanda simile. Sì, forse non sono stata felice nell'esprimermi disse lei, imbarazzata. Ma adesso il punto importante non è questo. Guardava davanti a sé, tenendo le mani aperte sulla rivista, mentre lui si sedeva pesantemente nella poltrona. Il punto è di sapere se ha completamente torto continuò. Qui, quando dice... e cercò con il dito. Ma no, è inutile scendere in dettagli. Insomma, è lui che sbaglia, vero? Il professore non rispose. Voglio dire, sei sicuro di quello che hai scritto. Bisogna saperlo, prima di rispondere. (*Il giocatore invisibile* 56)

The professor fails to recognize what, according to Pontiggia, really matters for the people who dedicate themselves to a life of studies: the pursuit of truth. As Giovanni Maccari underlines in his monographic work on Pontiggia, the Lombard novelist always felt a deep awareness of what being a writer means, and what kind of responsibilities it implies. Pontiggia strictly connected his literary activity with the purpose of finding and uncovering truth and, according to Maccari,

si è colpiti dall'interpretazione particolarmente consapevole da parte di Pontiggia della propria funzione di scrittore. [...] Scrivere buoni libri e divulgare il sapere senza snaturarlo appare all'illuminista Pontiggia la soluzione naturale del problema, a patto naturalmente che quei libri e quel lavoro si pongano come obiettivo la "verità." (13)

In *Il giocatore invisibile*, the victim is concerned with maintaining both his respected status of academic scholar and the fragile balance that holds his personal relationships together: he never goes deeper in the philological aspects of his etymological interpretation, to check if he has actually made a mistake. In this scenario, all the things the professor has always taken for granted in his life begin to fall apart, and precisely this destruction of self-confidence is the metaphorical assassination committed by the anonymous author of the attack published on "La parola agli antichi."²⁴

The name of the journal where the letter appears is not chosen by accident: in this novel, words are always charged with crucial importance in all the stages of the investigation. Words are used to perform the crime, but on the other hand they are used, in the form of philological analysis, in order to solve the mystery and figure out the identity of the invisible enemy. If we read this novel keeping in mind that its structure is meant to imitate a work of crime fiction, words are used as a weapon to attack and accuse an enemy, but they also represent the evidence of the crime and

²⁴ The metaphorical interpretation of murder has been explored by Pontiggia during a conversation that Ferruccio Parazzoli published in the volume *Il gioco del mondo* (1998): "Uno scrittore come te, che sembra avere una certa diffidenza nei confronti delle scelte definitive e inappellabili, può indicare uno fra i dieci comandamenti che ritenga totale? «Non uccidere. Uccidere è un atto irreparabile. Uccidere non soltanto in senso materiale ma anche morale. Uccidere significa togliere qualunque possibilità di riscatto»" (60).

Pontiggia's first novel, *La morte in banca* (1959), follows this interpretation of murder as an act that not necessarily involves the death of the body. This novel connects the uneasiness of a clerk, Carabba, to the metaphorical death of his desire to combine the alienating routine of his job with his intellectual aspirations.

the tool through which not only respond to an attack, but also to solve the case. Therefore, Pontiggia makes use of this constant reference to human expression in order to establish a direct relationship with the process of uncovering truth, in a complicated chain of events that are all connected by the relevance that is given to language: as remarked by Daniela Marcheschi, Pontiggia believed that “ogni parola è un mondo e non ci si può permettere distrazioni” (*Destino e sorpresa* 40).

The connection between language and truth is constantly presented throughout the novel: the “crime” itself, after all, only marks a mistake in order to reaffirm the correct interpretation of a word, which corresponds to re-establishing the truth after a lie has been told. As the investigation goes on, the language that the characters use is repeatedly subjected to inquiry in order to verify their potential involvement with the letter. More specifically, the professor is initially convinced that his colleague Liverani should be considered responsible for the attack, but a comparison between the language of the suspect and the peculiar words used in the letter rules out Liverani’s involvement. In such passages as the one that follows emerges the close connection between philological analysis and the attempt to use intellectual qualities as part of the investigation. This process proves successful, as Liverani is correctly excluded from the list of suspects:

Liverani non avrebbe usato l’avverbio “sempre”. «È una parola da riservare a un altro mondo» diceva fin dai tempi dell’Università. «Che cosa ne sappiamo di sempre?» Ed era troppo attento, troppo minuzioso nell’uso del linguaggio, per ricorrere a una parola in cui non credeva. [...] No, non era Liverani. (70)

While the “detective” never considers the use of philology to double-check the veracity of the etymology that generates the case, he nevertheless becomes obsessed with the study of the language contained in the attack, in the hope to find a clue that leads him to the solution of the riddle. Considering that the original letter was already a philological observation on the etymology of the word “hypocrite,” the reader is put in front of a reflection on literary self-referentiality: the professor performs the philological study of another philological study.

From a psychological point of view, the attempt to maintain a calm appearance fails miserably when the professor interacts with those who, such as his assistant, occupy a lower position in the academic hierarchy. After he tries to remain indifferent at the suggestion that he should go deeper in the analysis of the text, the protagonist has a very strong reaction that reveals how he has been hiding feelings of rage, shame and despair:

Ma che cosa vai cercando? Gli chiese. Perché scoprire l'autore? Allora la cosa prende piede, si ingigantisce. è [...] La mia era una semplice curiosità aggiunse. Nient'altro. Se le interessa, gliene darò i frutti. No! rispose il professore, con gli occhi dilatati. Lo vuoi capire che non mi interessa. Stavo già dimenticando tutto, prima che arrivassi tu. (48)

The situation changes dramatically in the private sphere: it is here that the professor lets his obsession overcome him and, once again, this condition emerges in the form of philological observation and analysis, which corresponds to another confirmation of the relationship between language and truth. After a dream gives him the illusion that all the available copies of the journal have been destroyed, the professor projects on a screen several enlarged passages from the letter, in the hope to realize something useful from the words that the author has chosen. This

passage is the fictional representation of one of the cornerstones in Pontiggia's thought: as remarked by Gennaro Mercogliano, one of the recurring and most interesting aspects in Pontiggia's production is not only the faith in the written word as carrier of truth, but also the alternation of such faith with its own negation.

According to Mercogliano, this alternation corresponds to two conflicting interpretations of life itself: a positivistic approach to the analysis of the world, and the simultaneous negation of the same approach.²⁵ This element emerges, once again, from the characterization of the protagonist. The professor is a person with apparently clear ideas on his own identity and function in the world, but these certainties are suddenly demolished by the letter in such a way that the crisis, that now becomes evident, is eventually admitted by the protagonist:

«Ma guarda» disse Cattaneo osservandolo. «Non avrei mai creduto che tu fossi così emotivo.» «Perché? » «Se mai un po' maniaco» proseguì Cattaneo. «Sì, attaccato alle tue fissazioni. Però non ti hanno mai intralciato più di tanto, hai sempre continuato per la tua strada.» «No, adesso no. Non riesco ad andare avanti nel mio lavoro». (176)

The author of the letter turns out to be Daverio, the younger colleague involved in an affair with the professor's wife. This solution is suggested and anticipated over and over again throughout the novel, but the protagonist always refuses this hypothesis, because it would hurt not only his professional position but his private life, as well. Thanks to his reasoning skills, the intellectual has the possibility to solve the crime, but he prefers not to see the truth that would otherwise be evident: this condition is clearly impossible to conjugate with the idea of scholar

²⁵ A very similar point of view is supported by Giovanni Maccari when he reflects on the short-circuit emerging from an investigation that is "inchiesta razionale dell'irrazionale", and he supports the idea that behind the faith in a positivistic approach Pontiggia feels a deep sense of distrust on how human beings deploy their potentialities (40).

that Pontiggia aims to transmit, and confirms his doubts on how human beings make use of their intelligence.

The element of a solution so evident, but intentionally ignored by the detective, poses a strong connection with one of the founding stories of the crime/mystery subgenre in modern times: Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter* (1845)²⁶. This short story presents an intellectual/detective, Auguste Dupin, who collaborates with the authorities but is at the same time representative of a different interpretation of detection and its techniques. Dupin supports the values of a psychological and abductive method that supplies to the limits of a merely scientific positivism, which is considered responsible for a close-minded approach to the case. Whereas the Prefect, in order to find the stolen document, dismantles every piece of furniture at the house of Minister D., Dupin easily solves the mystery thanks to his considerations on the personality of the suspect.

One of the elements that *Il giocatore invisibile* inherits from *The Purloined Letter* is the already mentioned failure of a strictly positivistic approach. The professor acts like Poe's Prefect when, by operating a philological analysis, he "dismantles" the letter in order to find the solution to the case, while all his friends are easily able to solve the riddle because they know what kind of person Daverio is. This aspect brings the discussion to a second point in common between Poe and Pontiggia: according to Dupin, the Prefect fails, above all, because he never tries to adapt his method to the psychological peculiarities of the opponent. This is how Dupin makes his point in the comparison between himself and the police:

²⁶ The influence of Poe on many Italian authors in different periods is noteworthy and it has been thoroughly discussed in several works. In particular, I indicate Melani, Costanza. *Effetto Poe: influssi dello scrittore americano sulla letteratura italiana*. Firenze: Firenze UP, 2006.

They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for any thing hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much – that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass*; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. (*The Purloined Letter* 373)

The professor acts exactly as Poe's policemen: he fails to recognize the specificity of the individual opposing him. As he focuses on himself and on his own internal crisis, the protagonist purposefully ignores that Daverio has strong reasons that would justify his attempt to destroy the rival: not only is he in love with his wife, but he is also jealous of the higher professional status of the colleague.

Daverio is, on the other hand, totally aware of the mental processes of the enemy, and this is the reason why he chooses an attack that proves so effective. His knowledge of the professor's personality is demonstrated in his dialogue with Martelli:

[...] «L'hai incontrato?» «Questa mattina.» «E com'era?» «Piuttosto depresso.» «Ti confesso che non vorrei essere al tuo posto.» Sporse la palma aperta dal finestrino. «Vedi» aggiunse «Non è tanto per la cosa in sé, quanto per i significati che le attribuisce lui». (117-18)

If we take into account the other metaphorical level upon which the novel is structured, the parallel between the plot and a game of chess, it is possible to affirm that Daverio is a player who has prepared for the game by carefully studying his opponent, and his thorough preparation grants him the possibility to attack with success. The victory that Pontiggia allows to the more prepared scholar is to be connected with the author's intention to award not knowledge as an amount of information *per se*, but in consideration of the ability to combine it with insightful skills of intelligence. The professor, who is victim and detective at the same time,

has not prepared properly and, if one takes into account how strict Pontiggia was in the interpretation of the role of the intellectual, this lack of preparation represents an unforgivable sin.

It has always been evident, throughout his career, how Pontiggia almost obsessively researched the most precise and coherent way of expression, which resulted in years of revision for novels that sometimes he gave to the press multiple times, including several updates and corrections. Thus, the enormous amount of time spent looking for the correct words to be used was not intended as a meaningless exercise. In Pontiggia's interpretation, this research was connected with the virtually everlasting attempt to reach as close as possible a coincidence between words and reality, which would correspond to get closer to truth as expressed in the form of a literary text.

It can be argued that the maniacal attention that some of the characters pay to oral and written expression suggests, to some extent, an example of self-mockery and a parodic portrayal of the author himself. Nevertheless, Pontiggia takes the process of discovery of truth through human language extremely seriously. It is crucial to realize how the victory belongs to the intellectual who can make a clever use of his knowledge: the professor, who is unable to do so, metaphorically dies as the castle of his convictions falls apart. The importance that Pontiggia gave to accuracy and precision of language was related to the distinction he established between those he considered amateurs and those to include in the list of authentic writers. This distinguishing feature brought Giovanni Francesio to include Pontiggia in the group of intellectuals he interviewed for *L'officina del racconto* (1996), a book

published in order to give voice to authors who did not believe in writing as a consequence of mere inspiration, but as a rational act that requires time and commitment to be performed properly. According to Francesio, such writers as Pontiggia

...si muovono tutti nella stessa direzione: ossia verso quella di un lavoro letterario che sia davvero "lavoro", tempo e fatica destinati alla realizzazione di un'opera: unico modo, in tempi dominati dalla superficialità e dal dilettantismo a buon mercato, per uscire dall'alone di faciloneria in cui, in questa catodica società di saltinbanchi, è stato precipitato anche lo scrittore; o almeno così si vorrebbe che fosse. (6)

We have already seen how the continuous attention to language and its constant revision are very often transferred to the fictional intellectuals acting in // *giocatore invisibile*, with results that are functional to the execution of the crime, as well as the solution of the case. This reflection on the accuracy of words is repeated with such frequency that it turns out to be one of the main themes of the whole novel, and more examples on this regard can be provided. The professor's wife is having an affair with Daverio and, like many other characters in the story, she starts to suspect that her lover could be the author of the letter. This situation leads to another moment of self-referentiality of language in the novel. Daverio first used the definition of the word "hypocrite" in order to attack his rival, and the same expression is now turned against him in a discussion with his lover, during which his language is analyzed and declared false and deceiving:

«Senti, tu mi nascondi qualcosa.» «No.» «Dì giuro.» «Giuro.» «Non mi basta, non mi convinci.» «Perché?» «Perché l'hai trovata subito una cosa naturale.» «Ma io non l'ho trovata subito una cosa naturale. Non farmi dire quello che non ho detto.» «Perché sei così ipocrita?» «Io ipocrita? Con te!» «Sì, con me. Tu non mi stai dicendo la verità.»

«Come fai a dirlo?» «Lo sento, lo capisco dal tuo tono, da tutto. E risparmiami le tue divagazioni sulla verità». (143)

The analysis of the language that Daverio uses confirms how, in this novel, all the characters share a common interpretation of the relationship between literacy and investigation. All the actors in *Il giocatore invisibile* insist upon an attempt to solve the problems of real life as if they were matters of philology. Only in the theoretical world of their specializations do they believe they possess enough intellectual authority to be considered reliable: this is the reason why the continuous attempt to escape reality in order to find shelter in the realm of philology becomes a recurring aspect of several dialogues between the professors. This latter tendency can also be interpreted in its implications regarding the connection between fictional personas and reality: with the construction of a self-centered group of characters, Pontiggia implicitly makes a statement about the condition of the Italian university, academic correspondent of the literary institution that in the second part of the twentieth century became so self-referential and isolated from the world outside.

The whole novel seems to be structured in order to reflect not only what Pontiggia considered the priorities in the relationship between the intellectual and society, but also to express several reflections on how the craft of writing should be undertaken. In particular, it is possible to establish a correspondence between the investigation and the act of writing. If any investigation involves a progressive discovery of something that is initially unknown, the idea that Pontiggia supported of the activity of a writer seems to be directly connected to the structure of a detective novel. Writing is what helps the intellectual make a step toward a truth he is not aware of in a first moment, and language is the medium that allows this procedure to

be completed correctly. As Pontiggia remarks in the already mentioned interview with Giovanni Francesio,

Insisto sull'idea dello scrivere non come trascrivere quello che si conosce già, non come far confluire sulla pagina un'esperienza i cui connotati si conoscono, ma come un riscoprire attraverso il linguaggio scritto quello che non si sapeva di conoscere al momento in cui si comincia il lavoro. (15-16)

Because of this interpretation of writing as a discovery, and of language as the means to accomplish the goal of the intellectual, the parallel with *Il giocatore invisibile* appears appropriate: indeed, in this novel the characters who make the right moves in the metaphorical game of chess are those who can use language correctly. This interpretation can also be useful in order to give a meaningful connotation to the end of the novel. When Daverio commits suicide without confessing his responsibility, he still leaves space for doubt in the professor, who cannot be positive about Daverio's involvement in the attack: from this perspective, the suicide is functional to the non-interruption of the research for truth. The result is a process that symbolizes Pontiggia's idea of everlasting improvement of what can be achieved by writing, which corresponds to always discover more, to find out something that we did not know at the beginning of the intellectual inquiry.

If we continue the parallel between this interpretation of the intellectual act of writing and the events narrated in the novel, another reason why the professor is defeated results evident: he is the character who denies the nature of the search for knowledge as a constant improvement, because he is too attached to that initial

position of power that he believes impossible to jeopardize.²⁷ From this standpoint, the construction of the character is a tool that helps the reader reflect on the opposition between the knowledge of the intellectual and the status, the public recognition he receives: the professor is evidently more interested in the latter aspect. Because the professor relies too much on his hierarchical position of prevalence on other characters (among whom is Daverio, considered an *eterno secondo*), he abandons the attitude to discover more and, because this approach contrasts with what Pontiggia indicates as the primary duty of the intellectual, the professor has to be punished with the total annihilation of his certainties.

The figure of the intellectual as a substitute for power becomes another major key of interpretation for a metaphorical reading of *Il giocatore invisibile*. In its identification with power, the character of intellectual/detective uncovers all its difficulties in accepting the idea of being challenged and discussed. The solution that Pontiggia finds for the representation of the crisis that power suffers against an unexpected attack follows the rules of literary satire.²⁸ In his quest for the solution of the case the professor, the character that carries the peculiarities of power, has to go through a series of situations whose goal is twofold. On the one hand, they make the crisis evident to the world surrounding the protagonist. At the same time, they are meant to ridicule the exterior appearance of rigidity that the social and

²⁷ The intellectual and the act of writing are also at the center of a satirical essay entitled “Il letterato e l’inesistenza,” which belongs to the collection *Il giardino delle Esperidi*. This short essay contains the mockery of how some intellectuals and scholars consider writing, being published and being read by their colleagues as essential for their own existence as individuals. In their opinion, the intellectual activity is therefore connected to the achievement of increasingly difficult stages of success and public recognition, not to a genuine research for truth and coherence of language.

²⁸ Pontiggia demonstrated a strong inclination to satire especially in the volume *L’isola volante* (1996), whose title is an homage to one of the masters of literary satire, Jonathan Swift.

professional positions of the professor would require. These amusing situations, meant to uncover how fragile the professor is, often reveal the weakness of his body as a substitute for the weakness of his psyche: for this reason, the protagonist almost faints in public, on a bus, when he realizes that his wife is unfaithful. Once again, it is an anonymous letter that forces him to face the truth:

Palpandosi con la mano destra la tasca della giacca, mentre premeva leggermente il ventre contro la parete dell'autobus, il professore sentì il contorno della busta e, estrarla a fatica, la aprì. Con il corpo piegato in avanti per proteggerla dagli urti, applicò la lettera al vetro e seppe che la moglie lo tradiva. [...] Riuscì a fare scivolare il foglio lungo il vetro e a nascondere nella tasca dei pantaloni. Sentì che sveniva. [...] Chiuse gli occhi. Una mano gli afferrò il braccio e una voce gli chiese: «Che cos'ha? Non sta bene?» «Niente» balbettò «Adesso mi passa.» «Vuol sedere? » Gli chiese un uomo anziano, vicino a lui. «No, grazie» rispose con voce più sicura. «Adesso scendo». (223)

This passage remarks the typical attempt that the representatives of power make in order to deny their difficulties, along with the intention to hide the source of their uneasiness. On the bus, not accidentally a public location, the professor realizes how his inner crisis cannot be hidden to the outer world. Nevertheless, the most dangerous threats to the respectability of the protagonist come from his own inability to deal with any situation where he cannot be in total control. In particular, the intellectual puts himself in a ridiculous position when he tries to turn himself into a man of action and, during a grotesque passage set inside a publishing house, he locks himself in the building for the night, in the awkward attempt to access the archives of the journal and find a document that proves the identity of the enemy.²⁹

²⁹ Along with the anonymous letter that ignites the engine of the novel, the passage in which the professor wanders in the darkness of an unknown building contributes to establish a certain connection between *Il giocatore invisibile* and the tradition of the gothic novel.

This attempt results in a double failure. First, the clumsy detective is caught by a watchman who identifies him and, therefore, contributes to the deterioration of his self-confidence. From now on, the professor lives in the awareness that there is a witness to his unconventional behavior, which is an indicator of how badly he feels despite the apparent normality that he wants to transmit to those around him.

Secondly, the identity of the person who has signed the letter turns out to be false: the author has signed with the name of professor Pasini, a character that has nothing to do with the challenge started by the invisible player. The protagonist has to learn his lesson the hard way and, once again, the price is paid by being put in ridiculous in front of other people: he hurries to Pasini's house and realizes too late that he is confronting the wrong person.

At this point, a real intellectual should have already understood that he was living the counterpart of an investigative novel and that, in order to succeed in the detection, some rules concerning crime fiction should be considered and respected. The professor keeps ignoring one of the most important principles of detective novels: he lets his own emotions overcome him, which causes the loss of lucidity in the investigation and the impossibility to find the truth.

It seems clear how the characterization of the intellectual at the center of // *giocatore invisibile* is the tool that Pontiggia uses in order to indicate what does not work properly in the relationship that men of letter establish between themselves and the quest for truth. While the entire novel can be read as a metaphor built upon different levels representing a real-life challenge and its metaphorical transposition into a crime story and a game of chess, the intellectual as a detective of his own

symbolical assassination suggests a reflection on what a really effective carrier of culture should be like. It is also possible to use the character and its initial condition of power for another metaphorical parallel of a more social and historical value. Attilio Scuderi has remarked how the meetings held to influence the results of a literary prize remind the reader of a lack of transparency which is not unique of the academic world but, especially in reference to the leaden years, becomes the symbol of the too many secrets and lies that distinguished the years of the *strategia della tensione*. (*L'ombra del filologo* 110) Throughout the novel, the professor becomes the representative of a hierarchical society that has not completely set itself free from the legacy of the fascist *ventennio*, while the close-minded approach to the investigation mirrors the immobility and lack of renovation of the leading class.

If we take into account how relevant these reflections are for a correct understanding of the Italian seventies, Pontiggia's fictional representation of the intellectual as a detective gains even more prevalence in the production of an author that, despite the peak of popularity experienced with the publication of *Nati due volte* (2000), is still waiting for an even broader recognition that he would certainly deserve as a novelist and a literary critic.

Chapter 3

The Intellectual between Obscurantism and Renovation: Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa*

In 1978, after many years of publications on literary theory and philosophy, famous semiotician Umberto Eco decided to undertake the writing of narrative fiction. The result of his resolution was *Il nome della rosa* (1980), a novel whose plot takes shape around a detective with strong intellectual connotations: the Franciscan friar William of Baskerville investigates a series of mysterious deaths in an abbey located in the north of the Italian peninsula. Such characterization of the main protagonist as a man of knowledge appears natural if one considers that culture and erudition are put at the very center of the structure of the novel, and they certainly are among the main topics to address for a correct literal and/or metaphorical interpretation of the story.

Ever since the earliest stages in the narration, it appears clear to the reader how William of Baskerville's cultural qualities are to be seen as strictly functional to the art of detection, and this distinguishing feature of his characterization will be constantly confirmed throughout the novel. One early example of William's extraordinary qualities of observation and abduction is given as he and his assistant, Adso of Melk, first arrive at the abbey where they will investigate the murders and, at the same time, prepare for an important political meeting of mediation between the

representatives of the Pope and the Emperor. William replies to the evident uneasiness of the monks outside the abbey with reassuring words on the whereabouts of the horse Brunello, which none of the characters has previously mentioned, and whose disappearance has not been notified to the newcomers. This is how William suddenly astonishes the monks:

Suvvia, è evidente che state cercando Brunello, il cavallo preferito dall'Abate, il miglior galoppatore della vostra scuderia, nero di pelo, alto cinque piedi dalla coda sontuosa, dallo zoccolo piccolo e rotondo ma dal galoppo assai regolare; capo minuto, orecchie sottili ma occhi grandi. È andato a destra, vi dico, e affrettatevi, in ogni caso." Il cellario ebbe un momento di esitazione, poi fece un segno ai suoi e si gettò per il sentiero di destra, mentre i nostri muli riprendevano a salire. Mentre stavo per interrogare Guglielmo, perché ero morso dalla curiosità, egli mi fece cenno di attendere: e infatti pochi minuti dopo udimmo grida di giubilo, e alla svolta del sentiero riapparvero monaci e famigli riportando il cavallo per il morso. Ci passarono di fianco continuando a guardarci alquanto sbalorditi e ci precedettero verso l'abbazia. (*Il nome della rosa* 31)

The importance of this first demonstration of sharp intellectual qualities can be observed in several consequences. It is one of the many factors that establish a direct correlation between William, the tradition of the detective story and the character of Sherlock Holmes, whose method is reprised by Baskerville. On an essay on the "evidential paradigm," Carlo Ginzburg has remarked the importance of the very similar episode about the three brothers who were able to identify an animal that they had never seen, and he has indicated this story as directly related to the founding paradigm of the modern mystery tale.³⁰ The comparison with Holmes is further justified if one considers that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave him the role of

³⁰ Ginzburg, Carlo. *Miti, emblemi, spie: morfologia e storia*. Torino: Einaudi, 1986.

protagonist in a story in which he had to figure out the location of a racehorse, the disappeared Silver Blaze.³¹

The second element that confers importance to the encounter with the monks is even more central for the analysis of the intellectual at the center of the novel: by demonstrating his extraordinary capacities of detection, the protagonist acquires from the very beginning the respect and, to some extent, the fear of those who cannot match his analytical skills and believe them to be the result of a magic and mysterious force.

Even more importantly, William's qualities of intelligence and education presently communicate a strong warning sign to the more powerful monks, characters that from the intellectual point of view will always represent the other side of the coin if compared to William. Whereas he uses erudition in order to solve the mysteries of everyday life, those who hold an elevated position in the hierarchy of the abbey try to prevent knowledge from accomplishing new discoveries. Their intention is to maintain and preserve the *status quo*: in their opinion, the less human beings are able to explain the phenomena of nature and science, the more they will

³¹ The parallel between William of Baskerville and Sherlock Holmes is evidently repeated throughout the novel. The monk is named after the title of a very famous story written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. What is even more important for the analysis of the narratological structure of *Il nome della rosa* is the narrator introduced by Eco: Adso of Melk is comparable to Conan Doyle's Dr. Watson, and this element seriously influences the perception that the reader has of the protagonist, William. Because he is constantly presented through the description of a narrator that is intellectually less gifted, the dialogues between the two characters always contain the explanation of the method that the detective uses in the investigation. What is supposed to be the explanation provided to Adso is, indeed, meant to clarify to the reader how the intellectual process of detection works. Similarly to what happens with Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, there is often a first stage during which the progress amazes the witness-narrator, and consequently the reader. The logical explanation of the analytical process, though, demonstrates how a series of abductions have been supported by the close observation of clues that most people overlook. There is no magic that supports the investigation, nor a supernatural quality of the detective: there is only the careful respect of a method.

be afraid of evil forces and, as a consequence, respectful of the law of God. This perception of the detective as a danger will be, throughout the novel, a recurring aspect of the relationship that he establishes with the setting.

William represents a threatening presence to the establishment because he uses reason and science when he investigates on a case that many believe, or rather want to believe, is originated by a supernatural, demoniac entity. Such solution, always ruled out by the detective, would certainly allow those who are responsible for the murders to get away with their crimes, while a more logic and analytical examination of the clues would more easily take the investigation towards the correct direction.³²

Because of these premises, the magnificent library that serves as a setting for the resolution of the case is kept inaccessible: only the librarian, Malachia, can access the books, and it is up to his wisdom to decide when it is appropriate to lend a specific book to a monk. Similarly to what happened with the Pillars of Hercules, the gates of the library cannot be trespassed, and no rational explanation is provided for this prohibition. What in the ancient tradition was the risk of meeting monstrous creatures over what we now call the Strait of Gibraltar, in the library corresponds to rumors of ghostly presences working for the devil and his temptations.³³ The prohibition to visit the library comes from the undisputable decision of the monks

³² Early in the investigation, William is advised by Ubertino to look for the responsible among the most literate monks in the abbey, not among the ignorant ones: "No, il male dell'abbazia è un altro. Cercalo in chi sa troppo, non in chi non sa nulla" (72).

³³ The parallel between the library and the Pillars of Hercules is shortly mentioned by one of the oldest monks, Alinardo da Grottaferrata (163).

who occupy positions of power and do not want William and Adso to challenge their authority.

This aura of inaccessibility has contributed to establish the reputation of the library, considered the biggest and most magnificent among those belonging to Christianity. At the same time, the strict censorship operated by Malachia has fostered the curiosity of the monks including, of course, the two newcomers. The isolation of the center of culture is pivotal in the events narrated in the novel, but it is also useful in order to propose a metaphorical reading of its structure: the place where culture is kept and collected rejects any interference coming from the world outside, an aspect that mirrors the self-referentiality that has characterized the literary institution in the final decades of the twentieth century. This element seems to acquire even more relevance if related to what Eco says in the introductory note to the novel, in which he expresses how the perception of the role of the writer in relation to society has changed since he (allegedly) first took possession of the French translation of the manuscript of Adso of Melk:

Trascrivo senza preoccupazioni di attualità. Negli anni in cui scoprivo il testo dell'abate Vallet circolava la persuasione che si dovesse scrivere solo impegnandosi sul presente, e per cambiare il mondo. A dieci e più anni di distanza è ora consolazione dell'uomo di lettere (restituito alla sua altissima dignità) che si possa scrivere per puro amor di scrittura.
(15)

The detective is therefore put in a dimension that is strictly internal to culture and literacy, and he is certainly well aware of this peculiarity in the investigation. Everything in this novel is related to the attempt to rule over knowledge, which is symbolized by the possibility to rule over the library, in order to exclude those who

are perceived as a danger for the *status quo*. During a confrontation with Bencio, William himself makes it clear that the intellectual dimension is where the mystery will find its solution and the story will come to its end, consequently establishing a direct connection between the books consulted in the library and the solution of the case:

Bencio esitò: “Non ricordo. Cosa importa di quali libri si sia parlato?” “Importa molto, perché qui stiamo cercando di capire cosa sia avvenuto tra uomini che vivono tra i libri, coi libri, dei libri, e dunque anche le loro parole sui libri sono importanti.” “È vero,” disse Bencio, sorridendo per la prima volta e quasi illuminandosi in volto. “Noi viviamo per i libri. Dolce missione in questo mondo dominato dal disordine e dalla decadenza. Forse allora capirete cosa è accaduto quel giorno.” (119-20)

Indeed, culture and books contain the primary clues that the detective has to consider if he wants to accomplish positive results in his investigation. Literary knowledge provides the setting for the whole story, and more specifically for the crimes investigated: William and Adso soon understand that the library has something to do with the mysterious series of deaths recorded in the abbey.³⁴ Throughout the investigation, books constantly play a major role in the different stages of the detection, with such a recurrence that it cannot be considered accidental. First of all, a book is the origin of the whole chain of events, and it corresponds to what in investigative terms would be called the motive to kill, *il movente*. Someone in the abbey cannot tolerate the divulgation of a book that, by supporting the pleasures that can be found in what is ridicule, indicates that truth

³⁴ The undeniable centrality of the library in the plot has fostered many comments about its literal and metaphorical role in the novel. It is particularly interesting to mention an article by Jeffrey Garrett, “Missing Eco: On Reading *The Name of the Rose* as Library Criticism”. This article represents one of the few reflections on the library to be published by librarians themselves.

resides in the lowest representation of human behaviors. While the religious institution can accept laughter and impertinence when they come from humble people, it cannot conceive their coming from respected intellectuals: the risk is that masses of people would see this as a justification for abandoning the dogma or making fun of it.³⁵

Following a parallel traced between the divulgation of knowledge and sin, the book becomes the tool through which to punish those who want to learn more than they should aspire to: thus, the book also becomes the weapon used to fulfill the killings, *l'arma del delitto*. Because the sin has to be punished, it is the very act of reading that, in a sort of *contrappasso*, completes the punishment against those who defy the authority, since the pages of the book have been poisoned.

The attempt to find and eventually read the book is the leitmotiv of the plot and, from the point of view of the monks, it represents the temptation to do what has been forbidden by a higher authority. The assassin is the strictly conservative Jorge of Burgos, who exploits the irresistible desire that everybody demonstrates for the book. He confirms his interpretation of reading as a sin to punish even in the final confrontation with the detective: Jorge uses the weapon of temptation in order to convince William to read the book and die, not aware that the investigator is wearing a pair of gloves, and the poison on the pages cannot affect him. In the attempt to turn their last encounter in the final showdown of an intellectual challenge, Jorge recognizes the victory of his opponent, only with the intent to exploit the pride of the

³⁵ In the words of Jorge about the concealed book, "...qui si ribalta la funzione del riso, la si eleva ad arte, le si aprono le porte del mondo dei dotti, se ne fa oggetto di filosofia, e di perfida teologia. [...] Ma questo libro potrebbe insegnare che liberarsi dalla paura del diavolo è sapienza" (477-78).

winner and the temptation to read the book. Because he believes that reading the book is both a sin and the defeat of one's will to resist a perverse temptation, Jorge wants the sin (to read) to coincide with the punishment (to die by reading) and he says:

“Leggi, allora, sfoglia, Guglielmo,” disse Jorge “Hai vinto.” [...] “Ci sei anche tu, ragazzo? Lo farò vedere anche a te... dopo.” [...] “Jorge avvertì che il fruscio dei fogli mossi era cessato, e incitò Guglielmo. “Su, leggi, sfoglia. È tuo, te lo sei meritato.” (470-72)

The final confrontation further confirms how the two rivals represent two opposite interpretations of the role that knowledge should play in the shaping of the relationship between different social classes. Baskerville wants knowledge to open the minds of those who are excluded from positions of power and cannot decide of their own destiny, while Jorge wants to keep the humble from rebelling against the *status quo*. Even the parallel between knowledge and sin, proposed by both characters, confirms their dualism, as they use this comparison with completely different modes and purposes. The desire to know more, to always overcome new barriers of knowledge, is compared by Jorge to greed and by William to lust (two of the seven deadly sins), but each character does so in order to support a different interpretation of erudition. Jorge mentions greed when the group of Italian monks rightfully wants the secret chambers of the *Finis Africae* to be open, so that knowledge can be accessible to everyone: “sono agitati dalla cupidigia di cose nuove” (468). He interprets as a sin the desire to improve the human condition through the access to new documentation. William, instead, refers to lust with opposite intentions when he criticizes the attitude of Bencio, who does not want to share the information contained in the books with the rest of the scholars. Bencio

embodies a negative connotation because he is only interested in enriching his own culture as a fulfillment of personal ambitions: “Come molti studiosi, ha la lussuria del sapere. Del sapere per se stesso. Escluso da una parte di esso, voleva impadronirsene” (398).

Despite many disagreements with the Pope and the Catholic institutions, William is still a character that carries the values of Christianity, and his opinions on the divulgation of culture support what he believes to be a Christian idea of community. He knows that it is exclusion that fosters those heretical groups that are so popular among poor, desperate people and those lowest sectors of society driven by feelings of revenge and compensation for the injustice that they suffer. Exclusion has to be avoided, because it is the original mistake that has given way to heresy and, as a consequence, to the revenge of the Church in the form of the Holy Inquisition, the institution that William used to work for. The reflection on exclusion, heresy and how power exploits them is accompanied by the explanation of how William distinguishes the role of culture in relation to the humble people, aware that the knowledge that the Church demands does not match the needs and the interests of the masses of people lacking education:

Esclusi com'erano dal gregge, tutti costoro sono stati pronti ad ascoltare, o a produrre, ogni predicazione che, richiamandosi alla parola di Cristo, in effetti mettesse sotto accusa il comportamento dei cani e dei pastori e promettesse che un giorno essi sarebbero stati puniti. Questo i potenti lo capirono sempre. La reintegrazione degli esclusi imponeva la riduzione dei loro privilegi, per questo gli esclusi che assumevano coscienza della loro esclusione andavano bollati come eretici, indipendentemente dalla loro dottrina. [...] Ogni battaglia contro l'eresia vuole solamente questo: che il lebbroso rimanga tale. Quanto ai lebbrosi cosa vuoi chiedere loro? Che distinguano nel dogma trinitario o nella definizione dell'eucaristia quanto è giusto e

quanto è sbagliato? Suvvia Adso, questi sono giochi per noi uomini di dottrina. I semplici hanno altri problemi. (206)

Even more than a distinction between literate and humble people, William remarks upon the difference between the intellectuals who act for the good of the common cause and those who want to use their knowledge for the pursuit of personal or even dangerous goals. Even though the protagonist wants the library to be accessible to everyone, he supports the idea that real knowledge has to coincide with wisdom and that progress in science should be handled only by those who want to use it in a positive way. Because the previous positions could be questioned and argued about as contradictory, William clarifies his ideas on the correct divulgation of science during a conversation with Nicola:

Si può peccare per eccesso di loquacità e per eccesso di reticenza. Io non volevo dire che occorre nascondere le fonti della scienza. Questo mi pare anzi un gran male. Volevo dire che, trattando di arcani da cui può nascere sia il bene che il male, il sapiente ha diritto e dovere di usare un linguaggio oscuro, comprensibile solo ai suoi simili. La via della scienza è difficile ed è difficile distinguervi il bene dal male. E spesso i sapienti dei tempi nuovi sono solo nani sulle spalle di nani. (97)

The value that emerges from the character of William is that of knowledge as connected to truth. He clearly wants to apply this interpretation to his investigative approach, and this intention is evident in the several conversations that he holds with the inhabitants of the abbey. In the meeting with Ubertino, the topic of truth through knowledge is connected to the distinction between what is good and bad:

“E guardati dall’abbazia. Questo luogo non mi piace.” “Voglio appunto conoscerlo meglio,” disse Guglielmo congedandosi, “andiamo Adso.” “Io ti dico che non è buono, e tu dici che vuoi conoscerlo. Ah!” disse Ubertino scuotendo la testa” (71).

This dialogue provides further demonstration of how the characterization of William is based on the restless curiosity that is typical of those who want to learn more, and confirms how these features are meant to be used for the practical purposes of the investigation.

On his side, Jorge is always represented as opposing any kind of renovation and change in the interpretation of religion and society, even way before the resolution of the case that discloses his responsibility in some of the murders. He is among the foreign monks who are indicated as responsible, in the description of Aymaro of Alessandria, for the isolation in which the abbey lies if compared to the nearest city, considered the symbol of new ways of intending life and social relationships based on economic exchanges. The direct consequence of this close-minded view on innovation is the exclusion from the library of books written in *volgare*, the language spoken by the common people, and this decision prevents the scholars who do not know Latin from visiting the abbey. The building is also symbolically placed in an isolated and high location from which it towers over the city almost like a fortress, a military installation that tries to defend itself from a potential invasion. This is how Aymaro complains about the way the abbey is organized, a description that points out some of the main topics that emerge from the reading of the whole novel, particularly those connected to the emergence of the new reality of the city:

Noi siamo qua, e laggiù nella città si agisce... Una volta dalle nostre abbazie si governava il mondo. Oggi lo vedete, l'imperatore ci usa per inviare qui i suoi amici a incontrare i suoi nemici [...], ma se vuole controllare le cose di questo paese sta nelle città. Noi stiamo a raccogliere grano e ad allevare pollame, e laggiù scambiano braccia di seta con pezze di lino, e pezze di lino con sacchi di spezie, e tutto

insieme con danaro buono. Noi custodiamo il nostro tesoro, ma laggiù si accumulano tesori. E anche libri. E più belli dei nostri. [...] Apriamo la biblioteca ai testi in volgare, e saliranno quassù anche coloro che non scrivono più in latino. (130-31)

The opposition between William and Jorge is a leitmotiv in the plot, as it emerges in all the conversations they hold, not just in the final confrontation. The strictly conservative attitude of the old monk is what characterizes him, and it will result evident how his opinions on the evil effects of laughter are connected to his interpretation of the relationship between the religious institution and the world outside of it. This aspect of his characterization is so central that, indeed, Jorge is first introduced in the story exactly when he strongly criticizes the works of Adelmo, who has reproduced in his drawings a parodic representation of the world. In this rendition, everything works in an opposite way if confronted to what nature appears like to humans: this novelty, according to Jorge's parameters, corresponds to going against the supreme will of God. The racy pictures that are still on the table of Adelmo, with their perverse representation of the bodies in the animal realm, generate laughter in regard to something as sacred as the creation of living beings. From the point of view of Jorge, the true scholar should be interested in what God has created, while admiring Adelmo's drawings puts the focus on the efforts of a person, not of God:

“Ma san Bernardo aveva ragione: a poco a poco l'uomo che rappresenta mostri e portenti di natura per rivelare le cose di Dio per speculum ei in aenigmate, prende gusto alla natura stessa delle mostruosità che crea e si diletta di quelle, e per quelle, né vede più che attraverso quelle. Basta che guardiate, voi che avete ancora la vista, ai capitelli del vostro chiostro” e accennò con la mano fuori dalle finestre, verso la chiesa, “sotto gli occhi dei frati in meditazione, cosa significano quelle ridicole mostruosità, quelle deformi formosità e

formose difformità? [...] Ormai è più piacevole per il monaco leggere i marmi che non i manoscritti, e ammirare le opere dell'uomo anziché meditare sulla legge di Dio. Vergogna, per il desiderio dei vostri occhi e per i vostri sorrisi."³⁶ (88)

Having introduced all these points in common between the plot of the novel and a more general reflection on the role of education, knowledge and culture, it is evident how books play a major role in all the different stages of both the crime and the investigation related to it, and how William's intellectual qualities are fundamental for the truth to be uncovered. If read from this perspective, *Il nome della rosa* is primarily a book that tells the story of another book, which is an interpretation that follows what the protagonist has perfectly understood thanks to his extensive literary knowledge: "Spesso i libri parlano di altri libri" (289). Not only does this quotation demonstrate how erudite William is, but it also expresses how he is able to make positive use of his knowledge in order to logically solve the case: he has figured that the library plays a major role in the murders, and he knows that hiding some of the books is what their opponents are doing in order to deceive him and Adso. This awareness emerges from the dialogue with the assistant/sidekick/narrator:

"Ma allora," dissi, "a che serve nascondere i libri, se dai libri palesi si può risalire a quelli occulti?" "Sull'arco dei secoli non serve a nulla. Sull'arco degli anni e dei giorni serve a qualcosa. Vedi infatti come noi ci troviamo smarriti." "E quindi una biblioteca non è uno strumento per

³⁶ Ever since *Il nome della rosa* was first published, it has been natural to interpret the figure of Jorge as the fictional counterpart of Argentinian novelist Jorge Luis Borges, and many scholars have underlined how several aspects in Eco's novel seem to be shaped after some of the features that distinguished Borges's works, such as labyrinths, mirrors, libraries and the self-referentiality of literature. Among other observers, Leo Corry and Renato Giovanoli have dedicated a long article to Borges as "author" of Eco's novel, in which the influence of the Argentinian author is pointed out more extensively. As they write in the literary magazine "Poetics Today," "The presence of Borges in the novel is a constitutive feature and not a superfluous detail imposed upon the writer by the initial setting of the plot, as Eco's claims in *Reflections* would have us believe. The inter-textual relationship between the novel and Borges's writings is not simply one of borrowed ideas and motifs, but is a much subtler and more intricate one" (427).

distribuire la verità, ma per ritardarne l'apparizione?" Chiesi stupito.
"Non sempre e non necessariamente. In questo caso lo è." (289)

It is precisely in this situation that William's intellectual approach gains more importance in its dualism with the way the abbey is run. The detective wants science to disclose its mysteries to mankind, while in the library science is used, in the form of such artifices as hallucinatory potions and deceiving mirrors, to prevent the books from being read: in a sense, science is used against itself. According to William, "Questo luogo della sapienza interdetta è difeso da molti e sapientissimi ritrovati. La scienza usata per occultare anziché per illuminare" (179).

All these reflections confirm how William of Baskerville is perceived as a threatening presence in the abbey, and how several aspects in his characterization comply with his embodiment of change and renovation. It is interesting to notice that a relevant part of what William represents is symbolized not only by the ideas that he supports, but by the equipment that he carries around, as well. In a cultural environment where the obsession with the devil is exploited in order to easily blame the humble for crimes that they have never committed, and also to eliminate characters that could potentially be hostile to the established hierarchy, the tools that are necessary for the correct undertaking of the investigation are perceived as instruments of evil origin. This perspective does not only pertain to the regular inhabitants of the abbey, but it also affects Adso. In a first moment, he feels insecure about the legitimacy of the apparatus that William carries with him and, despite his sincere allegiance to the more experienced partner, he recollects a sense of uneasiness when he remembers their first period spent together:

Dirò infatti che quest'uomo curioso portava seco, nella sua sacca da viaggio, strumenti che mai avevo visto prima di allora, e che egli definiva come le sue meravigliose macchine. Le macchine, diceva, sono effetto dell'arte, che è scimmia della natura, e di essa riproducono non le forme ma la stessa operazione. Egli mi spiegò così i portenti dell'orologio, dell'astrolabio e del magnete. Ma all'inizio temetti che si trattasse di stregoneria, e finì di dormire certe notti serene in cui egli si poneva (in mano uno strano triangolo) a osservare le stelle. (25)

Among these mysterious and fascinating items, the eyeglasses are given primary relevance in the events narrated and in their metaphorical interpretation. For a character of such knowledge and literacy as William, the eyesight is quintessential for the progress of the detection, especially considering the importance that the story recognizes to the written words contained in the books. For this reason, William's eyeglasses are stolen in order to slow down the investigation and prevent him from decoding the content of an ancient text.³⁷ At the same time, the excessive trust in the power of human sight misleads the detective: William repeatedly rules out the hypothesis that Jorge of Burgos is to blame for the murders because the old man is blind and weak, but precisely this character is at the origin of the criminal deeds, accomplished by using a particular poison that he puts in the pages of a book of Aristotle. The presence of mirrors aimed to deceive unwanted visitors in the library is also a metaphorical invitation not to trust what we see, but to thoroughly analyze everything and always go beyond the exterior appearances.

³⁷ In one of Leonardo Sciascia's detective novels, *Todo modo* (1974), the glasses that the devil wears on a painting bring to a dialogue with symbolic positions very similar to those the reader finds in *Il nome della rosa*. The protagonist of *Todo modo* criticizes how, for the Church, an instrument that helps humans see the truth is to be considered evil. His opponent, Don Gaetano, defends the position held by the Church, arguing that the correction of human eyesight is connected with the correction of nature, and is therefore symbolically represented as the distortion of the right doctrine.

During the novel, the efforts of William are focused on bringing truth to the surface, both in the investigation and the mediation between Pope and Emperor. It is interesting to notice how he uses a particular quotation from the Gospel of John, “La verità ci farà liberi,” in his meeting with Bernardo Gui and the Cardinal. According to the *cellario* of the abbey, this is the same motto that *frate* Dolcino used to convince his followers to negate the authority of the Church, pursuing a life of poverty mixed with the carnal pleasures of sex. At least from the dialectic point of view, William uses the same verbal expression that in the past symbolized the rebellion that he, as a former prosecutor of the Inquisition, had been appointed to judge.

The adventurous youth of the *cellario*, Remigio, and his participation in the rebellious experience of *frate* Dolcino introduce another aspect on the use of reason in relation with truth, or rather with its negation. If William embodies the values of a legitimate investigation, based on the analytical examination of clues from which a series of logic deductions and hypotheses develop, the novel also provides the example of a judgment that is carried out with completely opposite methods, premises and intentions: the trial against Remigio.

While Jorge represents William’s nemesis from the point of view of the interpretation of knowledge, religious institution and world outside, Bernardo Gui is the character that uses his rhetoric to go against William’s political mandate and intention. William wants his influence and respectability to facilitate an agreement between the Pope and the Emperor, while Bernardo clearly wants the mediation to fail. In order to reach his goal, Bernardo employs all his intellectual and rhetorical skills in the trial against Remigio. His idea is to blame the *cellario* for the same

ideological crime that he blames the followers of the Emperor for. Bernardo embodies the use of the intellect for political purposes, and he is not sincerely interested in disclosing the secrets kept in the abbey. From this perspective, he can be interpreted as an intellectual and a detective himself, but he carries values that are opposite to what the protagonist of the novel supports. Similarly to what happened in the worst tradition of the Holy Inquisition, the prosecutor is evidently biased and the defendant's destiny is already decided: Remigio can only choose between confessing or not, but there is no doubt that he will eventually be convicted. Remigio is charged for two different crimes: his allegiance to Dolcino and the murders in the abbey. While he was actually involved in Dolcino's rebellion against the dogma, he has nothing to do with the murders but, afraid of the possibility of being tortured, he prefers to confess both crimes. His responsibility for both crimes is irrelevant for Bernardo, as his rhetorical accusation is constructed upon the intention to use the ill-fated monk as a scapegoat in order to condemn those who rebel against the Pope, reaffirming the authority of the latter:

[...] una volta che si sia luminosamente dimostrato (come stiamo facendo) che l'eresia di coloro che predicarono e predicano la povertà, contro gli insegnamenti del signor papa e delle sue bolle, non può che portare a opere delittuose. Questo dovranno apprendere i fedeli e questo mi basterà. Confessa" Fu chiaro a questo punto cosa Bernardo volesse. Per nulla interessato a sapere chi avesse ucciso gli altri monaci, voleva solo dimostrare che Remigio in qualche modo condivideva le idee propugnate dai teologi dell'imperatore. E dopo aver mostrato la connessione tra quelle idee, che erano anche quelle del capitolo di Perugia, e quelle dei fraticelli e dei dolciniani, e aver mostrato che un solo uomo, in quell'abbazia, partecipava di tutte quelle eresie, ed era stato l'autore di molti delitti, in quel modo egli avrebbe recato un colpo invero mortale ai propri avversari. Guardai Guglielmo e

capii che aveva capito, ma non poteva farci nulla, anche se lo aveva previsto.³⁸ (385)

From the intellectual point of view, the trial represents a double defeat of culture intended for rational purposes: not only is the sentence against Remigio used to deliver a political result, but his conviction also implicitly admits the incapacity of the prosecutor to figure the identity of the real assassin, so that he has to blame the *cellario* in order to satisfy the urgency to see someone pay for the murders.

The events that follow the process will reaffirm the characterization of William as a detective whose primary interest is the discovery of truth, which he considers as an *intellectual* obligation, something that must be done because it is strictly connected with what is good and with the natural inclination of humans. Because the trial ends up in an evident denial of reason, no one in the abbey seriously believes in the illusion that the case is actually solved. When it becomes clear that William is close to uncovering the identity of the assassin, the abbot does not want the reputation of the abbey to be ruined and, in an extreme attempt to cover-up the whole investigation, he dismisses William from his appointment as a detective. It is precisely in the following passage that William makes clear how the interpretation of his role has passed the status of a challenge against himself, the assassin and the abbot, but it has now gone far beyond. Not only the solution of the case, but

³⁸ In addition to offering the example of a perverse use of the power of rhetoric, knowledge and intellect, the episode of the trial belongs to a more general reference on the role of those groups of monks who rebelled against the Church in the Middle Ages. Once again, the intellectual element is pivotal in this discussion, because the rebellion was based on the very interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures. The rebels supported the idea that in the Bible Christ is never said to possess anything, and thus they proclaim the value of poverty as paramount. By negating this interpretation, part of the religious institution aimed to maintain the set of privileges that came with the possibility to possess values.

knowledge or, at least, a presumption of knowledge is presented as a goal that *must* be accomplished as a moral and intellectual obligation:

“Vuole che io parta domattina? Bene, lui è il padrone di casa, ma entro domattina io devo sapere. Devo.” “Dovete? Chi ve lo impone ormai?”
“Nessuno ci impone di sapere, Adso. Si deve, ecco tutto, anche a costo di capire male.”³⁹ (454)

In the ultimate sacrifice to defend his cause and destroy the book of Aristotle, Jorge commits suicide by swallowing the poisoned pages, but he accidentally sets the entire library on fire. The literary institution that both the building and Jorge symbolized is destroyed not by what it feared so much, an intrusion from the outside, but from its own representative. As a confirmation that everything pertaining to the literary institution is to be seen as a strictly internal affair, any attempt from the outside to extinguish the fire is vain: because of its own isolation and intricate design, it is impossible to reach all the chambers that constituted the labyrinth, whose content is destroyed.

³⁹ The passage reported in the quotation further reinforces the difference between the protagonist and his assistant, who does not demonstrate a real commitment to the cause of truth once the abbot dismisses them. His will to abandon the detection also comes from the already mentioned inferior intellectual qualities of the narrator that, because of his impossibility to understand the importance of all the clues gathered so far, at this stage does not believe in a positive resolution of the case. Even more than an inferior cultural background, Adso demonstrates an inferior capacity when it is necessary to combine erudition and detection. Whereas his companion can never satisfy his desire to know more and improve his knowledge, Adso often feels negatively concerned and overwhelmed by the possibility that he is learning “too much” during the investigation, almost in recognition of the fact that, in order to stay humble and avoid the sin of pride, one should prevent himself from becoming too erudite. This aspect offers another opportunity for a parallel with the characters of Holmes and Watson, upon which the partnership between William and Adso is based. As Gian Paolo Caprettini has remarked on how unevenly the two characters apply their knowledge into detection, “Sherlock Holmes rimprovera spesso a Watson di non vedere ciò che ha sotto gli occhi ma tale difetto dipende solo in parte dalla superiore cultura di Holmes. Non ci aspettiamo certo che Watson possa emulare il suo compagno nello stabilire l'altezza di un uomo sulla base della lunghezza del suo passo, o classificare minuziosamente i resti della cenere di tabacco. Tuttavia, queste informazioni, le più inaccessibili anche al lettore, vengono sempre fornite puntualmente al narratore senza che egli sappia trarne vantaggio. Egli continua a “vedere senza osservare” ” (161).

The ending of the novel confirms the characterization of William as a carrier of values of culture and truth, with a final reflection on the correct way to embody the role of the intellectual. As the building burns down and the most important of the Christian collections of books is lost forever, the detective reserves his last thoughts to his opposition with Jorge. As he underlines how the old monk had represented a perverted intellectual interpretation of faith in the Scriptures, William goes back to a reflection on truth and the exaggerations of those who pursue it without enough temperance:

In quel viso devastato dall'odio per la filosofia, ho visto per la prima volta il ritratto dell'Anticristo, che non viene dalla tribù di Giuda come vogliono i suoi annunciatori, né da un paese lontano. L'Anticristo può nascere dalla stessa pietà, dall'eccessivo amor di Dio o della verità, come l'eretico nasce dal santo e l'indemoniato dal veggente. Temi, Adso, i profeti e coloro disposti a morire per la verità, ché di solito fan morire moltissimi con loro, spesso prima di loro, talvolta al posto loro. (494)

The final dialogue between William and Adso is particularly revealing of the opinion that the two partners have of the task accomplished. Adso, always one step behind in all the analytical processes, pays the maximum tribute to the investigation led by William. The protagonist, instead, becomes severely critic of the method that he has relied on, recognizing how the solution of the case has been delivered with the help of chance and good luck, and how isolating a series of signs is not sufficient if one is not capable of finding the correct correlation that keeps them together. As remarked by Peter Bondanella, the fictional detective and the reader are responsible for the same mistake, connected to the very nature of the traditional detective novels: they both convince themselves of the existence of a clear pattern of events,

which is an idea that would go together with the concept of classic mystery stories, based on the interference on a pre-existing order that the discovery of truth has to re-establish. If the primary qualities demonstrated by William are those of erudition and knowledge, even his main errors are of an intellectual nature. In the words of Bondanella,

William's abductions falsely assume the existence of order and purpose in his world and in the universe. We as readers fall into the same logical trap experienced by William because detective fiction of a certain type – that popularized by Conan Doyle or by the English tradition of the Golden Age of detection – trains readers to seek out patterns and to resolve mysteries as if they were puzzles. (99)

As the dialogue between William and Adso approaches the ultimate topic of the very existence of God and of an undisputable Truth, the conversation is suddenly interrupted by the collapse of a nearby building: the two characters intentionally avoid returning to the topic, abandon the abbey and part ways.

From both the investigative and intellectual points of view, the ending of Eco's first novel seems to reaffirm many elements that had previously emerged in the fiction of other authors, particularly in the already analyzed production of Leonardo Sciascia. William, the erudite detective, somehow succeeds in solving the mystery of the murders connected to the book of Aristotle. At the same time, this intellectual victory does not come with the possibility for the truth to emerge and be proved: the destruction of the book implies the disappearance of the most important evidence. In a sense, the victory is granted to Jorge, because he is the one who reaches the goal of keeping the book inaccessible. As a consequence, William is represented in the same condition as many of the protagonists in the novels of Sciascia, who are often

able to solve the cases they investigate on, but can never bring their opponents to justice because they cannot demonstrate the validity of their discoveries.

It becomes possible to trace a clear, broader correlation in the way some of the most important Italian writers have represented men of culture in their quest to find and uncover truth. The impossibility of the characters of Sciascia and Eco to share their discoveries corresponds to the condition denounced in real life, and in first person, by Pier Paolo Pasolini in the famous 1974 article “Che cos’è questo golpe?”. Pasolini lamented the sad situation of the intellectual who knows the identities of the people responsible for many of the problems of the Nation, but cannot do justice because he lacks evidence: *Io so, ma non ho le prove*. It is precisely with this kind of knowledge, not supported by evidence, that Eco characterizes William, when he solves the case but loses the book in the fire at the library. Nevertheless, the destruction of the evidence reinforces the centrality of the intellectual in his role of witness: while the truth cannot be proved in a trial, it can certainly be told and narrated in a book. This reflection suggests the importance of the separation between recorded history and the role of the intellectuals, who should always be free to insinuate doubts and ask questions in the process that leads to truth: in this sense, it is important that Eco does not let his detectives die in the fire of the library, as they can become testimonials of what happened there.

In the next chapters of this study there will be the opportunity to focus more on the centrality of Pasolini in the discussion about real-life intellectuals, and to see what happens when their fictional counterparts employ their cultural qualities in the search for truth.

Chapter 4

Intellectuals in Noir

My study has so far pointed out how several authors included in the traditional canon of Italian literature have, at different stages of their careers, proposed a personal interpretation of the detective novel. Not only have these authors created extremely original and interesting examples of crime fiction, but they have also presented a conspicuous number of works in which it has been possible to underline the centrality of characters of relevant intellectual scope. These characters are distinguished by their ability to combine three fundamental factors: values of culture, investigative skills and, as a result, attention to the uncovering of truth. This last element emerges from the solution of the fictional investigation, but it is very often connected to the discussion about society and the position that intellectuals assume in it.

Italy has also been home to a different, parallel tradition of detective novels that, albeit very successful commercially, have often been less appreciated from the point of view of the artistic value that they express. While the first tradition (represented, among others, by the novels of Sciascia, Pontiggia and Eco that I have already discussed) finds its premise in the very beginning of the Western mystery tale as defined by Poe, Conan Doyle and Chesterton, the second and arguably less “noble” subgenre stems from the transformation in the detective novel

operated in the United States during the 1920s and the 1930s, which brought to the diffusion of noir and hard-boiled literature. The origin of this transformation is usually recognized in the works of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, who opened a new path with their novels that, by depicting widespread violence and corruption, made it increasingly difficult for the readers to distinguish the good from the bad in every character they analyzed.⁴⁰ This different tradition was already present in Italy during the first half of the twentieth century, but it came to wider prominence in the 1960s, with the production of Ukrainian-born author Giorgio Scerbanenco, who adapted the traditionally American setting of noir novels to the city of Milan. In the last few decades, this branch has seen an unprecedented increase in both commercial success and attention from the critics, and it has even been put at the center of the Italian literary discussion.

The extremely diverse category that falls under the definition of “crime fiction” has been the absolute protagonist of the Italian editorial landscape from the end of the twentieth century to today. Far from representing a simple revival, this process has established the noir as a tool particularly apt in order to address the main issues that contemporary Italy faces. Hard-boiled and noir fiction have provided a medium through which Italians reflect on racism, new immigration, violence in small and big cities, organized crime and many other topics of compelling relevance. This recognized ability to participate in discussions of social impact has granted the

⁴⁰ In Italy, noir and hard-boiled novels have represented a very particular case, especially considering the coincidence between the popularity of these subgenres and the years of Fascism. Because of their tendency to uncover what of violent, dangerous and scandalous was to be found in big urban centers, the regime always ostracized the diffusion of these publications, in the attempt to depict Italian cities as immune to such depravation. Interesting exceptions to the censorship were those novels where the responsible for the crimes turned out to be a Jew, or those stories that, by depicting the obscenity of British and American metropolis, would remark an opposition with how livable Italian cities could be considered.

authors of crime fiction simultaneous consensus from both the readers and the critics: while the former have traditionally demonstrated attachment to the sub-genre, the latter have seldom responded enthusiastically in the past.

Similarly to what happened with the more “noble” production of detective stories, the new Italian noir and hard-boiled novels often introduce the character of the intellectual at the center of the investigation, although this coincidence is verified with important peculiarities that will be necessary to point out. Such differences pertain, first of all, to the changes in Italian society and the very interpretation of the condition of the intellectuals as related to the communities they live in. While, in modern times, higher education has become accessible to an increasing number of people, it has also become more diversified and based on specialization. As a consequence, the character at the center of strictly contemporary novels of crime fiction is no longer an intellectual in the “classic” sense of the definition: the character that proved his fine erudition through the mastery of Greek and Latin, of the Sacred Scriptures, of liberal arts that we have appreciated in the works of Sciascia, Pontiggia and Eco is now often replaced by a modern alter-ego who specializes in a more restricted number of disciplines. For this reason, psychologists, journalists and computer scientists have increasingly been given prominence as main characters of noir literature.

The process of detachment and isolation between the intellectual and the rest of society, already found in the characters of the traditional detective novels, has gone so far that men of culture now often represent themselves through a sarcastic parody, a self-mockery that distinguishes many of the strictly contemporary

detective/intellectuals. While the protagonist of *Il nome della rosa* could be legitimately considered a faithful tribute to Sherlock Holmes, the more recent transformation of the detective in Italy harks back to such characters as Philip Marlowe but, instead of loyally reproducing his features, it turns them upside down.⁴¹ In addition, the contemporary noir strongly denotes the contamination of several narrative forms that differ from the traditional detective novel: is it not unusual to find the influence of comics, graphic novels, pop music, mass-media, television and the Internet.

One example of these new tendencies here introduced is the recent production of an emerging novelist, Paolo Roversi. The protagonist of his novels, Enrico Radeschi, is a journalist whose connections with the police would be supposed to provide him with exclusive material to be published on Italian newspaper *Corriere della sera*. What usually happens is that the journalist has to pay a very risky price for the information he receives, as he ends up being directly involved in several investigations on murders in both the city of Milan and the geographical region of *Val padana*. In the case of Radeschi, the intellectual premise is extremely autobiographic, and many points in common connect the author to his fictional creation. Radeschi is the curator of an online magazine, *Milanonera*, which has a correspondent counterpart in the real world, as Roversi actually is the director

⁴¹ In order to introduce the authors discussed in this chapter, it was necessary to remark the parallel paths of the two traditions of the Italian detective novel, which is a topic that would certainly deserve more attention. Because my intention here is to specifically focus on the role of the intellectual as a detective, I will not look any deeper into the differences between the two traditions. I will only add that the separation between the two sub-genres is so deeply felt that, in the volume *L'Italia in giallo*, Massimo Carloni clearly expresses the intention to exclude from his history the novels written in the style of Sciascia, as he prefers to focus on those novels that hark back to the hard-boiled tradition.

of a website of the same name.⁴² In addition, Radeschi's exceptional skills as a hacker prove extremely useful when it is necessary to bypass the slow bureaucratic system of the police. This aspect diversifies his perception as a man of knowledge, completing his characterization with a thorough preparation on new technologies. All these features participate in the construction of a character that, in order to complete the investigation, has to properly combine his cultural qualities with more direct action, which is required when it is necessary to pursue and physically face criminals.

The autobiographical origin of Enrico Radeschi is an element in common with many detectives in Italian literature, and it is one of the reasons why so often these characters embody intellectual values that are naturally inherited from the real-life experience of the writer. In a short interview that the author kindly agreed to have with me, he goes back to the creation of the protagonist and how he was originally conceived. Answering about how much of his personal experience is to be found in Radeschi, Roversi remembers:

Nel mio caso moltissimo. Quando pensai per la prima volta al mio personaggio Enrico Radeschi, cercai di caratterizzarlo al massimo, costruendolo sulla mia esperienza. Su quello che conoscevo per risultare estremamente credibile al lettore. All'epoca facevo il giornalista e mi occupavo di cronaca nera. E giravo in sella a una Vespa gialla del 1974. Insomma Radeschi rappresentava me in quel momento. Il mio personaggio è frutto di letture e influssi di altri. Vasquez Montalbàn in primis e Giorgio Scerbanenco poi. Senzo di loro Radeschi non sarebbe mai nato.

⁴² Similarly to what happens with another author discussed in this chapter, Carlo Lucarelli, Roversi has made an extensive use of the new technologies in order to create a non-traditional *persona* for himself. He has done so particularly thanks to his direct involvement in several websites and social media, which has created a direct communication between him and his audience.

It is possible to describe Radeschi as a character that simultaneously expresses the identity of the modern intellectual and its own parody, as well as a tendency to make inter-textual tributes to authors who belong to the history of the Italian *giallo*. One first example of the coexistence between two different levels of characterization, serious and parodic, can be found a few pages after he is first introduced to the reader in *Blue tango* (2006). This passage is indicative of how much this alternation will be a constant and distinguishing feature of the character. After the assassination of a prostitute, Radeschi is able to publish an article on the front page of *Corriere della sera*, which gives him public recognition and a little money to pay his bills. He is described as accurately reading the newspaper as he walks his dog Buk, named after American poet Charles Bukowski. This atmosphere of intellectual attention is disturbed by a sudden, amusing event that is also symbolically representative of how the consideration we have of culture can be variable:

Il suo articolo era in prima pagina. In basso a destra con un richiamo alle pagine interne, quelle di Milano. [...] Radeschi era intento a leggere l'articolo, in piedi in mezzo al marciapiede, quando venne apostrofato da una voce stridula. "Lì gliela fa fare? Lei è veramente un maleducato!" [...] Si ficcò una mano in tasca ma di sacchetti manco l'ombra. Non li portava mai con sé e non la raccoglieva mai. Come tutti del resto. Quella volta, però, si sentì in colpa e non trovò di meglio da fare che strappare la pagina del giornale e raccogliere dall'asfalto quel che restava della *parillada* della sera prima. Risalì in casa comunque soddisfatto. L'articolo gli avrebbe fruttato dei bei soldini e, per una mesata buona, lui e Buk, sarebbero stati a posto. (*Blue Tango* 20)

The noir has often been described as one of the most representative subgenres of today's Italian society, particularly because of its attention to strictly contemporary social issues. The previous quotation opens the discussion on another

characteristic of Enrico Radeschi, which is the reference to how young Italians struggle to free themselves from the uncertainty that comes from the unavailability of long-term work positions. Throughout this series of novels, the protagonist constantly has to sacrifice his writing talent in order to sell his articles: not only he compromises with the police on what to mention or hide in his pieces, but he is also forced to accept the influence of his mean director, Calzolari, if he wants to receive a salary and therefore satisfy his primary needs. The following quotation is representative of how Calzolari usually addresses the journalist, in a cultural environment that relegates the intellectual to the same sacrifices that are common to many young people struggling to keep their temporary jobs: “«Senti, scegli tu: preferisci una rubrica tutta tua come hai adesso, articoli di nera ogni tanto e ferie quando puoi, o nessuna rubrica fissa, nessun articolo e ferie illimitate tutto l’anno?»” (*La mano sinistra del diavolo* 25). The relationship between the intellectual and a boss who embodies, for the journalist, the possibility to express his ideas and be read by his audience, is connected with the sensation that a given article can generate, and not necessarily based on the artistic or cultural relevance of a written piece. It is in the convenience of the director to correlate the articles with scandalous details and sensationalistic titles, and the journalist often needs to cope, in spite of himself, with the rules of the industry of communication.

Radeschi also demonstrates to be willing to sacrifice part of his little earnings as a tribute to what he believes is a justice that goes beyond the law: as he solves the case at the center of *Blue Tango*, he decides not to denounce two Peruvian

immigrants who, after the assassination of one of their coworkers, chase down the murderer but only accidentally turn themselves into killers.

The compromise between the intellectual faculties of the journalist/detective and the necessity to make money for a living are constantly repeated in the novels of Enrisco Radeschi and, because of this reason, he has learned not to take his status as a man of culture too seriously. The involvement in intellectual activities goes together with the attempt to earn money, and the following passage is an example of how Roversi expresses the coexistence of these two factors. It is curious to notice that, if the protagonist usually employs his intellectual faculties in order to solve difficult cases, here the process is reversed, and his experience as a detective is required in order to proofread novels. The passage also underlines how the bookshop is not meant to enrich one's knowledge but, at least in this example, is intended to help the serious financial straits of the protagonist:

Stava correndo in libreria, e non certo per sete d cultura: ci andava per racimolare un po' di quattrini extra. Trentadue anni, giornalista free lance, viveva di collaborazioni e salti mortali per arrivare alla fine del mese. Lui e il suo labrador Buk erano condannati alla miseria cronica, al punto che, per sopperire ai periodi più difficili, si era inventato una seconda professione. Incerta e, se possibile, ancora più precaria della prima: lettore e «consulente tecnico» per una minuscola casa editrice. Il suo compito consisteva, in virtù dell'esperienza maturata in inchieste poliziesche ed ammazzamenti vari, nel determinare se una particolare efferatezza o una certa procedura investigativa fossero possibili anche nella realtà o se l'autore, al contrario, ci avesse ricamato troppo sopra. (*Niene baci alla francese* 16-17)

One of the reasons why noir literature represents the reality of today's Italy is the mixture of themes that are typical of this sub-genre, such as the depravation of the metropolitan life behind the shiny appearance of the most famous streets, and

the reflections on more strictly contemporary issues, such as new immigration.⁴³ In the specific case of the works of Paolo Roversi, the detective as a journalist is particularly fit for the metropolitan setting: he is the person who tells the stories of what happens in the city, a thorough expert of the multiple faces of the metropolis, and he evidently knows how to use this background in order to successfully finish his investigations. Radeschi is also a character whose personal origins lie in the *Bassa padana*, and this aspect evidently influences his relationship with the big city: because he comes from a small town, he is always able to describe the metropolis with the detachment necessary for a legitimate analysis. His description of the city reflects the attitude of a person who loves experiencing Milan but is also aware that a different lifestyle is possible and worthy of consideration.⁴⁴ Because the presence of the city is so relevant in Roversi's novels, his production naturally finds its spot in the tradition of the Italian noir: the connection with the metropolitan setting has

⁴³ The following long quotation from *Blue tango* can be useful for the understanding of how Roversi depicts the city of Milan as the setting of his novels: "Un intero mondo. Uomini in giacca e cravatta, donne in tailleur, ragazzi in jeans, ragazze in minigonna di pelle e anfibi. Ragazzini con videogiochi sotto agli occhi, adulti col palmare in mano. Zingare con gonne variopinte, una donna col passeggino, un tizio con la fisarmonica al collo e un bicchiere di carta per le offerte. Un pakistano con un cartone piegato sotto al braccio e un borsone nero fra le gambe. Un paio di tizi, di quelli che il posto a sedere l'avevano trovato, col portatile già acceso. Una schiera di ragazzi con lo zaino posato a terra e le cuffie ficcate nelle orecchie. Crotchi di colleghi che chiacchieravano del weekend appena trascorso. Neri, cinesi, turisti. Due uomini con l'accento dell'est europeo con secchio e cazzuola. Impegnati e disimpegnati, coscienti e incoscienti, equosolidali ed egoisti, angosciati preoccupati stressati e annoiati, frivoli e gaudenti. Rampanti e sfigati, modelle e cassintegrati, tonificati da saune e fitness center, fanatici del salutismo, schiavi del junk food, anime in pena in cerca del guru, vecchi fricchettoni, punkabbestia coi cani. Nevrotici che somatizzano le cose più insignificanti, igieniste in guanti bianchi, paranoici, psicotici, maniaco-depressivi, ansiose, anoressiche, compulsive con la mania dello shopping, ossessionati dal sesso e dalla carriera, precari in attesa d'un corso che non arriva mai, interinali di megastore sempre aperti, fanatici dell'happy hour, pensionati al minimo e nipotini coatti. Abbonamenti vidimati, cartellini da timbrare, ticket restaurant, gessati, bandane, cappellini, piercing, tatuaggi, nike puzzolenti e mocassini impeccabili, ventiquattrore da manager e da travet, zainetti e tracolle, i-pod e lettori cd e libri e gabbie coi gattini." (51-52)

⁴⁴ The familiarity with the two different realities represented by the big city and the small town is particularly felt in *La mano sinistra del diavolo*. In this novel, the protagonist deals with two parallel investigations, one concerning a series of murders committed in the *Bassa padana* and another one set in Milan.

always been so strong that, in the already mentioned *L'Italia in giallo*, Massimo Carloni proposed a *geographical* history of the sub-genre, as he grouped novels by following a distinction based on the cities that provided their setting.

The adventures of Enrico Radeschi develop in the continuous alternation between his abilities as a journalist, hacker and man of action, all qualities that are always functional to the investigations that the protagonist undertakes with his longtime friend, the policeman Loris Sebastiani, who embodies a more traditional interpretation of the detection.⁴⁵ Because of his intellectual background, the journalist is involved in physical fights only in spite of himself and, because he can only use force in an awkward way, he often ends up being shot, injured or fainting. In a highly symbolic episode, Radeschi fights for his life against a serial killer and, not having the permission to carry guns, he cannot use anything but his pen as an extreme weapon of defense, almost expressing with this gesture the desire to be transported to his usual habit of writing, in a dimension where the pen is mightier than the sword:

L'uomo invece di correre decise che era più sicuro sbarazzarsi anche del giornalista. Caricò a testa bassa. Senza pensare, Enrico cavò di tasca la Montblanc che gli aveva regalato anni prima don Lino e, appena il bestione fu a tiro, come un novello Ulisse, gliela piantò nell'occhio destro. Non proprio nell'occhio, per la verità, ma nel sopracciglio, che si squarciò. La ferita iniziò a sanguinare copiosamente, accecandolo. (*La mano sinistra del diavolo* 215)

⁴⁵ Sebastiani is also functional to the many inter-textual references and connections between the investigations of Radeschi and the history of the Italian *giallo*. His direct superior, the *questore* Lamberto Duca, is a clear reference to Duca Lamberti, the protagonist of the novel written by Giorgio Scerbanenco, founding figure of the Italian noir. Sebastiani is also used for an inter-textual reference when, going through the personal belongings of a potential terrorist, he is surprised by the books he finds: it is a collection of some of the masters of the Italian and foreign noir, books written by Ellory, Mc Bain, Lucarelli, Carlotto, Scerbanenco.

Similarly to what happened with the professor at the center of *Il giocatore invisibile*, when the intellectual tries to demonstrate abilities as a man of action the results are often grotesque: this is the solution that the contemporary noir has found in order to express that separation between theoretical and practical qualities that has been a leitmotiv of my inquiry on characterization thus far.

The presence of grotesque elements in the narrative construction of characters is not unique of the intellectuals who try to turn themselves into men of action: this tendency also affects the nature of those detectives who, initially distinguished by purely physical and violent features, try to justify their behavior with quotations that no longer refer to canonical works of high-brow culture. One of the most evident examples of this peculiar type of characterization is Inspector Coliandro, the protagonist of a series of noir novels written by Carlo Lucarelli. Coliandro represents the other side of the coin if compared to all the investigators I have so far introduced: he can be interpreted as embodying the parodic representation of the features of the intellectual/detective. Whereas the characters presented by Sciascia, Eco, Pontiggia and even Roversi base their investigative methods upon strong intellectual premises, Coliandro seems to be built on the complete absence of this aspect, allowing the prevalence of those “connotati diseroicizzati” of the protagonist that Bacchereti has remarked (112).

Lucarelli depicts an inspector whose investigative approach lacks any serious methodological preparation regarding the art of detection, and whose success in solving crimes is often the result of an external help, of good luck or of the employment of brutal force.

From the perspective that is most relevant for my inquiry, the relationship between the detective and culture, Coliandro is evidently far from any serious involvement in intellectual activities or interests: this aspect of his characterization is clearly underlined in the stories he lives in, and it shapes his identity from the very beginning of his adventures. The novel *Falange armata* (2002) provides a perfect example of the relationship between the Coliandro and literacy. Lucarelli uses a recurring element of the novels that I have discussed so far, the accusation against the detective of letting his interest in crime fiction influence the investigation, in an original way with the goal of affirming the distance, rather than the connection, between the detective and culture. After a silly mistake, Coliandro is relegated to the position of *sovrintendente*, and this is what happens during one of the dialogues with the *questore* of Bologna:

– Sovrintendente Coliandro, lei legge troppi gialli – . Non è vero. Io non leggo quasi mai e comunque non leggerei un libro giallo neanche se mi pagassero. Sono tutte cazzate, quelle dei gialli. (*Falange armata* 79)

The diffidence towards the subgenre *giallo* is not corresponded by an interest that Coliandro feels for a traditionally more “noble” narrative fiction: on the contrary, he finds inspiration in what seems to be an obsession for violence in popular culture. His heroes are the protagonists of films in which the procedures of the law are bypassed by the primacy granted to a sense of individual justice reached through violence. As a consequence Coliandro, who is the narrator of his own adventures, fills the recollection of the events with a continuous series of quotations from his idols, particularly those belonging to his favorite genres, the American western and action movies. By performing this operation, the character seems to justify and take

pride in his own use of violence, which not always results in a success: he often is beaten up by a stronger opponent. The parallel with a modern Quixote seems to fit Inspector Coliandro, whose love for action movies is so strong that it seriously affects his decisions in the investigation, very often with grotesque results. Lucarelli himself, commenting on the characterization of Coliandro, points out how the protagonist of his novels builds up, through his aggressive rhetoric, a series of expectations that often remain unfulfilled. Because the author did not want to legitimize the violent and racist attitude of the character he created, he had to find a solution to clarify how Coliandro is not representative of the author's ideas: "Così ho risolto con l'ironia. Coliandro fa una cosa, una delle sue, dice una cosa delle sue, pensa una cosa delle sue, rambiste, machiste e razziste, e inevitabilmente finisce in una situazione ironica in cui fa brutta figura, sempre" (*L'ispettore Coliandro* VII).

It should be underlined that, even before the mentioned *brutta figura* proves Coliandro wrong, the Inspector is already constructed in such a way that it cannot be interpreted as anything but a parodic rendition of a macho character. Coliandro has such faith in the movie characters he admires that he does not realize how ridiculous this devotion makes him appear: the parodic representation of an intellectual finds its legitimation in several examples of popular culture, western movies or investigative TV series. In the following attempt to appear brave and tough in front of a woman, Coliandro offers his own version of a line borrowed from one of the actors that he prefers, Clint Eastwood:

Non provare più a prendermi per il culo o finisci male. Tu ti stai divertendo, ma io sono qui che faccio il mio lavoro e sono un poliziotto, se non l'hai ancora capito. E c'è di più, bambina: *sono cattivo, incazzato e stanco*. L'ultima frase è di Clint Eastwood, quando fa il

sergente istruttore in *Gunny*, bestiale. È tutta la vita che sogno di dirla anch'io e devo averla detta bene, perché Nikita sta zitta per un po', finché non ingrano la marcia e riparto. (*Nikita* 19)

Shortly after this attempt to demonstrate his masculine superiority, Coliandro has to retreat and apologize to his partner Nikita, which corresponds to a supreme act of surrender for a person as sexist as the Inspector:

Io *Happy Days* non lo guardavo mai ma una volta mi hanno detto che sono un po' come quel tipo là, Fonzie, che non riusciva neanche a dirlo *chiedo scusa*. Figurarsi ad una donna. Poi però penso all'indagine, penso alla faccia di quel bastardo del questore quando gli porto la soluzione del caso e mi faccio forza. (*Nikita* 20)

The controversial relationship with Nikita underlines even more how poorly prepared Coliandro is from both the intellectual and the investigative points of view. Nikita is the improvised partner who is constantly in a dominant position because of her superior reasoning skills, and she also provides access to a network of acquaintances and connections among the youth of Bologna that often supplies to the investigative deficiencies of Coliandro.⁴⁶ Similarly to what happens with many of his heroes, the Inspector is characterized by the desire to be involved in fights or car

⁴⁶ We have seen how *Il nome della rosa* is built about an interaction between investigator and assistant that owes much to the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: albeit sincerely committed to the solution of the case, Adso always remains one step behind from the point of view of the ability to combine erudition and investigation. The Italian noir has often proposed an inversion of roles if compared to the more traditional mystery novel. In the Italian noir, the character initially supposed to be the sidekick often turns out to be decisive from the intellectual point of view, as opposed to a main character that is constructed on features that do not require the extensive use of reasoning skills. The example of Nikita and Coliandro is not isolated in the literary panorama of noir novels: a similar interaction can be found in the novels of Lorian Macchiavelli, whose main character Sarti Antonio needs the assistance of a college student, Rosas, in order to find a logic meaning in the clues collected during the investigation. Moreover, exactly like it happens with Nikita, Rosas is able to guide the detective through the part of the city that gravitates around the *centri sociali*. Because both series take place in Bologna, the characters of Nikita and Rosas are also relevant for a study of youth culture in the city through different decades.

chasings but, whenever it is necessary to collect and figure out the different pieces that form the puzzle of the detection, he is stuck in a condition of stale.

Through the character of Coliandro, Lucarelli participates in the discussion about culture and its relationship with the process of uncovering truth. By creating a fictional detective whose cultural background lies in examples of mass culture acquired without the intervention of appropriate interpretative skills, the author is not merely representing the distance between the intellectual/detective and society: he is rather proposing the total absence of intellectual qualities in the detective, a goal that justifies the amusing situations mentioned.

Coliandro can be interpreted as symbolizing the disappearance of the social function of the intellectual today, in a way that reminds of the warning signs sent by so many scholars. For example, in the preface to the interview that Alberto Asor Rosa gave her, Simonetta Fiori remarks the extinction of the figure of the *Maître à penser* as a distinguishing feature of our society. In a discussion about intellectuals that has many points in common with the study that I have undertaken, she even uses the term “illusion” in reference to the attempt that intellectuals make in order to influence history and society: “Quella tracciata dallo studioso è l’illusione coltivata per decenni dal ceto colto di poter intervenire sulla realtà modificandola” (*Il grande silenzio* 4).

As a consequence of these premises, in his novels Lucarelli uses an ironic narrative device for the characterization of Coliandro, and this aspect becomes useful in representing the disappearance of the traditional figure of the intellectual. If analyzed from this perspective, the character of Coliandro serves the purpose of

rendering, in fiction, the lack of real-life carriers of cultural values. Albeit in an awkward way, Coliandro also embodies the values of a simple life that clashes with the metropolitan setting, and his limited cultural background is pivotal in this process of characterization. As he describes the Inspector, Costantino Maeder refers to his lack of education as one of the main features to consider when analyzing the character:

figlio dei *mass media* sempre più beceri, a quanto pare senza formazione scolastica degna di tal nome, un giovane perso in un mondo metropolitano multiculturale, frammentato e travolto da cambiamenti sempre più rapidi (la *velocity* dei teorici postmodernisti), il ragazzo anche malinconico e nostalgico di un passato in apparenza più semplice, ordinato e prevedibile, figlio di un poliziotto che ha perso la vita a causa di un'autobomba mentre scortava un giudice. (288)

Apart from fiction, the disappearance of prominent figures of intellectual value has been theorized, among other examples, in the works of the already mentioned Alberto Asor Rosa and also by Remo Ceserani. In a 2006 article, "Intellettuali liquidi o in liquidazione," Ceserani reflects on the relationship between intellectuals and contemporary societies dominated by mass culture and media. One observation particularly fits my study on the role of the man of culture and his investigative quest for truth: according to Ceserani, the figure of the *grande intellettuale* (Benedetto Croce, Norberto Bobbio) and *scrittore engagé* (Leonardo Sciascia, Pier Paolo Pasolini) disappears exactly when society denies him the right to investigate and accuse.

It is evident how the pseudo-intellectual references provided by Coliandro are not functional to any investigative process, but they only participate in the creation of

a literary persona whose obsession for action movies does not help the progress of the investigation. The alternation of bold, macho statements and consequent *brutte figure* is such a recurring element in the novels of Lucarelli that it can be considered as the main aspect of the characterization of the protagonist. Another quotation can be a valid example of what happens every time the detective tries to imitate his fictional heroes. As his opponents are not impressed by the attitude of the Inspector, Coliandro is defeated twice: first because he cannot physically prevail in the fight that his words generate, secondly because of the humiliation that derives from the necessity to get help from a woman. This is how the protagonist-narrator recollects his attempt to question some of the young people involved in the organization of a *centro sociale*:

So cosa ci vuole con questa gente. Fisso il tipo e metto le mani sui fianchi, come Steven Seagal in *Programmato per uccidere*, bestiale. La giacca mi si apre e si scopre la pistola come Mel Gibson in *Arma Letale 2*, bestiale. Il tipo fa un passo indietro e mi guarda come se fossi Clint Eastwood in *Una magnum per l'ispettore Callaghan*, bestiale. – Calma, bello, - dico, - sono della polizia, - ma il tipo non si calma per niente. *La polizia!*, sibila, *la polizia!* ripete il Moicano, forte, e prende un mattone da terra, *la polizia!* dice qualcuno dentro alla casa, *'izia 'izia* si sente dappertutto, su per lo scalone, dietro le finestre, sui tetti. Si interrompe anche la musica. Nikita mi prende per un braccio, con uno strattone da farmi perdere l'equilibrio e mi porta via, mentre saltello su una gamba sola e le corro dietro per non cadere. (*Nikita* 26-27)

Considering all the novels taken into account thus far in my study on the characterization of the intellectual as a detective, Nikita is the first female protagonist that emerges from a fictional world almost entirely populated by men. In the detective novels that I have discussed, women are either absent or relegated to a role of secondary importance. Their characters are very often constructed through

extremely traditional connotations, particularly regarding the opposition between men, distinguished by intellectual qualities, and women, characterized by sensuality and physical attractiveness. The clearest example of this condition is Sciascia's *A ciascuno il suo*, where the woman represents the temptation that eventually leads the protagonist to his own ruin. In Pontiggia's *Il giocatore invisibile* the unfaithfulness of a female character participates in the emotional crisis of the improvised detective, and a younger woman is limited to the function of sexual affair. In Eco's *Il nome della rosa* a woman is again connected to the idea of temptation and sin, as she is secretly involved in a sexual intercourse with Adso and the *cellario* in the abbey.

An original variation on the representation of women in crime fiction is yet another intellectual, the psychologist Anna Pavesi, protagonist of a series of novels by Piedmontese writer Alessandro Perissinotto. The construction of a female character, operated by a male author, is based on the continuous uneasiness of the psychologist who, in spite of her, is turned into detective. Particularly in the novel *Una piccola storia ignobile* (2006), the presence of an intellectual works as the link between bourgeoisie and emargination.

As a therapist, the protagonist uses her specialization in order to support or exclude hypotheses regarding the investigation, while she mentions the sonnets of Francesco Berni and the novels of Friedrich Dürrenmatt. The narration develops as a series of flashbacks, while the narrator digs into the ground to uncover the body of the victim. Throughout the novel the protagonist is always involved in the act of digging, in a metaphoric representation of how she successfully performed her search for truth. In line with the opportunities that the strictly contemporary noir

offers, the series of Anna Pavesi is distinguished by the fictional discussion about social matters of actual relevance.

The city of Milan described in the works of Perissinotto is made of two different worlds that do not communicate: the daily routine of the white-collar population never intercepts the lives of those who struggle in misery, and this aspect is especially depicted in *L'ultima notte bianca* (2007). Here, the intellectual works as a bridge connecting these two separate worlds, in the attempt to guarantee justice for the outcasts of society. The initial reluctance to be involved with an investigation on violent crimes is overcome by the prevailing sense of justice towards those who do not receive the attention of the authorities because they are excluded from the network of social interactions.

From the point of view of the artistic value of their characterization, the detectives discussed in this chapter probably do not match the level of those found outside the tradition of the Italian noir. Nevertheless, their qualities as intellectuals certainly participate in the construction of characters with strong implications of social impact.

Thanks to these detectives, the authors explore a realm that is unknown to their public. Because these characters deal with the violent crime of the streets and with social exclusion, they force us to reflect on that hidden, perverse and sometimes inexplicable part of society that, as Mickey Spillane suggested in the foreword to his *My Gun is Quick* (1950), the average reader often overlooks or intentionally disregards.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ "When you sit at home comfortably folded up in a chair beside a fire, have you ever thought what goes on outside there? Probably not. You pick up a book and read about things and stuff, getting a

vicarious kick from people and events that never happened. You're doing it now, getting ready to fill in a normal life with the details of someone else's experiences. Fun, isn't it? You read about life on the outside thinking of how maybe you'd like to watch it. Even the old Romans did it, spice their life with action when sat in the Coliseum and watched wild animals rip a bunch of humans apart reveling in the sight of blood and terror. [...] But remember this: there *are* things happening out there. They go on every day and night making Roman holidays look like school picnics. They go on right under your very nose and you never know about them. Oh yes, you can find them all right. All you have to do is look for them. But I wouldn't if I were you because you won't like what you'll find" (5).

Chapter 5

From Pasolini to Saviano: reality, fiction and literature of inquiry

In one of the most acclaimed and discussed literary efforts of the recent years, *Gomorra* (2006) by Roberto Saviano, the author clearly pays a tribute to Pier Paolo Pasolini. The protagonist remembers visiting the tomb of the poet, at the same time reprising the incipit (“Io so”) from the well-known article “Che cos’è questo golpe?”, first published in 1974 on Italian newspaper «Corriere della sera».

Similarly to what happens with many of the episodes narrated in *Gomorra*, the trip to the cemetery of Casarsa may or may not have actually taken place with the exact dynamics described in the text. Nevertheless, this episode is one of the several elements in the novels that open the way to a deeper analysis of the connection between the two authors, in order to fully appreciate how Saviano has received and elaborated the intellectual legacy left by Pasolini.

What happens when, instead of creating characters of detectives with sharp intellectual qualities, the man of culture turns himself into an investigator, proposing his own figure directly at the center of the literary creation? In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to discuss the connection between Saviano’s *opera prima*, which so far represents his most important literary achievement, and the final part of the production of Pasolini, during which he became increasingly concerned

with the vortex of falsity and lies that was affecting Italy in the seventies. I will establish a parallel between *Gomorra*, the already mentioned article published on «Corriere della sera» and, in particular, the never completed *Petrolio*, which appeared posthumously in 1992, seventeen years after the death of the author. The similarity that strikes most is the construction of a character that reunites three different functions: the same entity represents the voice of the author and is, at the same time, narrator and protagonist of an investigation on such real-life phenomena as institutional corruption and organized criminal activities. The intellectual/detective, in the simultaneous positions of investigator and direct witness, gains particular importance for my analysis, because this peculiar condition constitutes the clearest link between characterization and historical reflection.

Among the several scholars who have demonstrated interest in the intellectual legacy of Pasolini, Carla Benedetti has always been very direct in underlining how *Petrolio* is a novel whose main topic concerns how Power is managed. Power and its hidden schemes ignite the engine for the actions of Carlo of Polis during his ambitious attempt to reach success in his career at ENI, in his travels to the Middle East and in his participation in exclusive circles of intellectuals. This topic is central to the entire production of Pasolini during his final years: according to the author, ambiguous relationships with Power keep intellectuals from uncovering truth on the massacres that brutally hit Italy, and even prevent the Pci from denouncing the names of those who are responsible for the *strategia della tensione*. Pasolini believes that Power, represented through the metonymy of the *Palazzo*, should be put under trial in a public debate, most similarly to what

happened in the United States after the scandal that involved President Richard Nixon.

This aspect is the first, extremely important point in common with *Gomorra*: Saviano's "romanzo no-fiction"⁴⁸ elaborates the description of how several clans ruthlessly compete for dominance in the north of Campania; the exact word "potere" is continuously repeated throughout the narration, becoming a sort of leitmotif. At the same time, a pivotal difference evidently emerges between the Power investigated by the detective Pasolini and the one narrated by the witness Saviano. What Aldo Troya and Carlo long for is an enduring form of power, which works in symbiosis with the administration of public affairs and later intercepts private wealth.

It is the rise towards the peak of the institutional pyramid that is looked for; the goal is to reach a privileged position from which it becomes possible to take advantage of a network of acquaintances and relationships, regardless of whether they can be considered legitimate and not. In *Gomorra* the quest for power, albeit similar, differs in the hierarchy of priorities: the economic interest always maintains primacy, and the acquisition of a position of power is subordinate and depends on the financial success that a given clan claims. This difference originates in the radical transformation happened in the recent years in the camorra: the new "Sistema" has perfectly adapted to the modern rules dictated by the globalized market. In the management of its business apparatus, a clan makes decisions based on postfordist principles, gaining extremely high profits in a short range of time by

⁴⁸ It is noteworthy how the definition of "romanzo no-fiction," accepted by Saviano himself in order to relate two terms indicating one fiction and the other reality, is comparable to the title used in *Scritti corsari* (1975) for Pasolini's article: the title "Il romanzo delle stragi", too, ideally establishes a connection between fictional world and documented reality.

taking advantage of resources that can be abandoned as soon as the exploitation is complete.⁴⁹

It is primarily in this element that the difference between the power discussed by Pasolini and Saviano is found: if Troya/Cefis could hope to reach a position that would allow him to control public affairs for a long time, the *camorristi* presented by Saviano are aware of the impossibility to hold an enduring dominance. The “Sistema” is structured in such a way that a clan cannot maintain its prevalence for too long: it is necessary that new actors replace the old ones in order to create competition and lower the price for drugs, weapons and the elimination of toxic wastes. The priority is given to the creation of a market whose rules do not differ much from those regulating legal exchanges.

The aspect that pertains to the structure of power brings the discussion to an interesting point in common between Pasolini and Saviano: both authors do not limit their efforts to denouncing the negative elements of power, but they also succeed in uncovering the obscure mechanisms behind it. This is the *performative* element of the works here discussed, their ability to affect the perception that the audience experiences of reality: the reader of *Petrolio* is forced to rethink his opinion on Italian history in the sixties and the seventies, and the people reading *Gomorra* cannot help feeling surprised when they realize how their daily, legal purchases often contribute to fund the illegal empires of crime.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Luca Poggi has cleverly connected this aspect of the criminal organization with the concept of “Complex Connectivities”, as expressed by John Tomlinson in his *Globalization and Culture* (1999). Tomlinson demonstrates how, in the contemporary world without commercial boundaries, systems of networks and connections have increasingly become more complex and difficult to entirely understand.

⁵⁰ This discussion intercepts a more complex and articulate reflection on the function of literature today. The second half of the twentieth century saw the establishment of a “literary institution”,

It is interesting to point out a coincidence between the means through which power is conquered, organized and managed and the mechanisms ruling the novel. Although Troya makes his bid for power through what is possible to imagine as a pyramid, he proceeds creating a system of Chinese boxes, an intricate network of societies and companies that originate never ending branches. Saviano describes the economic empire of Neapolitan *camorra* in a similar way, as an infinite network of connections that is extremely difficult to understand.

If power is shaped as a network, Pasolini and Saviano seem to suggest that the novel has to adjust to such a form and imitate it. Thus, both authors put the autobiographical figure of the intellectual/detective at the center of a complex system of connections that is functional to the management of power because it produces points of intersection where power is received, transformed and eventually redirected. The closer the narrator is to the core of the reality he describes, the more he can observe and tell about the mechanisms running the machine represented by illegality: the novel needs to be structured in such a way to facilitate the task of observation. From a structural point of view, in *Petrolio* the representatives of power come together in the refined cultural parlor of Ms. F., whose function is anticipated by the voice of the investigator:

Seguendo in tutte le sue ramificazioni l'impero dei Troya, dovremo finire per forza a un rametto finale, all'ultimo pollone, segnato peraltro, come si vedrà, da un drammatico punto interrogativo, essendo di natura doppia: si trova infatti, come vedremo, al punto di incrocio tra un universo e un altro, metà di qua e metà di là, metà in un dominio metà

closed and self-referential, based on the idea that literature refers to itself and consequently remains external to the real world. Such authors as Pasolini and Saviano represent a different interpretation of the role of literature, as their works not only reflect on the reality outside the literary institution but they also try to actively affect it. On the opposition between these two interpretations of the literary activity it is important to mention Benedetti, Carla. *Pasolini contro Calvino*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999.

in un altro. E la sua ambiguità fonderà il senso della storia di Carlo e delle sue scelte. (114)

The parlor becomes the center of the network of power because it is simultaneously funded by different political parties: it does not happen by accident that Carlo has to go there in order to win the trust of powerful people and consequently receive tasks that, once successfully performed, will help his bid for power inside ENI.

In *Gomorra*, the same function of a place where power is collected and transformed is given to the harbor of Naples, “crocevia di giganteschi movimenti d'affari sporchi, sempre più incontrollabili.” (Policastro 186) This particular location becomes the setting for the shocking opening scene of the novel, with the dead bodies of undocumented immigrants falling from a container, but it can also be considered the main setting of the whole work. The role of the harbor in *Gomorra* is constantly connected to its strategic function of center of exchanges, of business and not of simple place of arrival for the ships. This aspect is once again referred to what happens in relation to the globalized economy of our days:

“Quando vado al molo Bausan ho la sensazione di vedere dove passano tutte le merci prodotte per l'umana specie. Dove trascorrono l'ultima notte prima di essere vendute. Come fissare l'origine del mondo. In poche ore transitano per il porto i vestiti che indosseranno i ragazzini parigini per un mese, i bastoncini di pesce che mangeranno a Brescia per un anno, gli orologi che copriranno i polsi dei catalani, la seta di tutti i vestiti inglesi d'una stagione.” (*Gomorra* 14-15)

It is important to keep in mind that in *Gomorra* economic exchanges, and therefore money, are always to be intended as “origine e prodotto del potere” (Arvigo 316): the branches of business are the branches of power. This is the reason why

organized crime, having understood the opportunities that the harbor offers, is so focused on its function of crossroad:

Il sogno degli stakeholder di Hong Kong è fare di Napoli il porto di snodo dei rifiuti europei, un centro di raccolta galleggiante dove poter stipare nei container l'oro di spazzatura da intombare nelle terre di Cina. (*Gomorra* 321)⁵¹

In *Petrolio*, it is through the correct analysis of the logic of power that the detective comprehends how the physical elimination of Bonocore/Mattei is functional to the fulfillment of the ambitions of Troya/Cefis. It is also necessary to take into account the enormous economic interests of such countries as France and United States, which did not see positively the open attitude the Mattei demonstrated in regard to a more equal distribution of revenues with the Nations of North Africa and the Middle East. For what concerns Saviano, it is the author himself to establish a direct relation between written words and the possibility to disclose how power is organized and structured, in the description of the perverse but also strictly logic *Sistema* of the camorra. Saviano reflects on the potential role of human expression while visiting the tomb of Pasolini, in a passage that is extremely significant for my study of the characterization of the intellectual as a detective. By explicitly establishing for himself the role of investigator in relation to his identity as a writer, the protagonist of *Gomorra* provides a reflection that clearly indicates how the

⁵¹ French sociologist Marc Augé has addressed in *Non-places*, a very influential work published in 1995, the emergence of particular settings for contemporary fiction. By pointing out the increasing importance in everyday life of such places as airports, shopping malls, parking lots or ATMs, Augé remarks how all these places do not participate in the formation of the individual identity as much as it happens with other places as the house or the working place, where people spend much of their time. Following this distinction, the harbor of Naples should belong to the first category, because it is supposed to be a place of quick transit for goods and people. But, in the reality that the character witnesses, the effect is opposite: the port becomes a fundamental location for the shaping of the illegal market and the human relationships connected to it, and it becomes quintessential for both the understanding of the philosophy behind organized crime and for the influence it has on the detective.

efficacy of writing can be as powerful as that which derives from the use of a weapon:

Mi andava di trovare un posto. Un posto dove fosse ancora possibile riflettere senza vergogna sulla possibilità della parola. La possibilità di scrivere dei meccanismi del potere, al di là delle storie, oltre i dettagli. Riflettere se era ancora possibile fare i nomi, a uno a uno, indicare i visi, spogliare i corpi dei reati e renderli elementi dell'architettura dell'autorità. Se era ancora possibile inseguire come porci da tartufo le dimanche del reale, l'affermazione dei poteri, senza metafore, senza mediazioni, con la sola lama della scrittura. (233)

Uncovering the mechanisms of power is what gives these works qualities that would otherwise be impossible to reach through the use of a merely *constative* writing and a general complaint on what does not work in society. On this regard, it is possible to observe a radical transformation in the production of Pasolini in the mid-seventies. In the article "Che cos'è questo golpe?" Pasolini claims knowledge of the people responsible for the massacres happening during those years, but he is forced to stop in front of the lack of any evidence that would support his accusations. Rather than addressing specific and individual responsibilities, Pasolini moves a general attack against Italian politicians, in a way that resembles what Leonardo Sciascia did when he published such novels as *Il contestato* (1971) and *Todo modo* (1974).

The radical change of direction happens with *Petrolio*, in which Pasolini makes precise, individual accusations after he finds a source of inspiration in the potential involvement of Eugenio Cefis in the death of Enrico Mattei. Pasolini also uses as documentation a copy of a banned book, *Questo è Cefis: l'altra faccia dell'onorato presidente*, which will be the source for the references to the life of Aldo

Troya in *Petrolio*.⁵² The intention of Pasolini is clear: through the publication of *Petrolio* he wants to make the biographical information on Cefis public, indirectly granting a second life to the banned book which was retired from the stores all over Italy. Pasolini is finally in possession of the evidence to hold against power, and he is seriously resolute to make extensive use of the recently gained information for the writing of his forthcoming, monumental book meant to stand at the edge between reality and fiction. If taken into consideration from this perspective, the creation of fictional *alter egos* for Mattei and Cefis appears irrelevant: should the novel have been published, the correspondence with events and characters actually present in real life would have never been questioned.⁵³

Because his narration is based on direct experience and not on documentation, Saviano cannot make use of any of the artifices that put distance between reality and fiction in the novel of Pasolini. In the attempt to reach what Alberto Casadei calls “Neorelaismo 2.0,” Saviano has to firmly stick with the reality of names and protagonists of the criminal deeds that he narrates: *Gomorra* introduces the reader to a reality that is more unpredictable than fiction. Whereas the reader imagines to find mobsters imitating the actions and words of Al Pacino in *Scarface*, the author exceeds such expectation and makes a significant step forward, telling the story of a world where dreaming is not necessary because indeed “puoi essere Scarface, però ti tocca esserlo fino in fondo” (*Gomorra* 280).

⁵² The real author hiding behind the pen name Giorgio Steimetz was most likely Corrado Ragozzino, director of Agenzia Milano Informazioni. Ragozzino was connected to Graziano Verzotto, one of the contacts of both Enrico Mattei and journalist Mauro De Mauro. Following its publication, all the copies of the book were suddenly retired, but Pasolini received one from psychoanalyst Elvio Facchinelli.

⁵³ As part of a game Pasolini plays with the reader, in *Appunto* 131 he denies the creation of a novel based on actually existing people, which instead is exactly what he did.

Even in one of the most discussed characteristics of *Gomorra*, the enrichment of several of its side-stories with elements that are not actually verified in real life, it is possible to read the “naturalistic” intentions of the author. Fictional elements are not intended to put a distance between reality and narration, but they become functional to the enhancement of the experience of participation in the reader. The “false” details used in the narration serve the goal of putting the reader even closer to the point of view of the narrator, which corresponds to the perspective of the intellectual/detective: through this artifice, the attempt to find a coincidence between author, character and narrator reaches its climax and even tries to incorporate the reader. On this regard, it is worth mentioning the words of Wu Ming 1 who, while reviewing the book, remarked:

Ha importanza, a fronte di ciò, sapere se davvero Saviano ha parlato con Tizio o con Caio, con don Cir o col pastore, con Mariano il fan di Kalashnikov o con Pasquale il sarto deluso? No, non ha importanza. Può darsi che certe frasi non siano state dette proprio da lui, ma a qualcuno che gliele ha riferite. Saviano, però, le ha ruminare tra le orecchie tanto a lungo da conoscerne ogni intima risonanza. È come se le avesse sentite direttamente. Di più: come se le avesse raccolte in un confessionale.⁵⁴

Saviano’s realistic purpose is not jeopardized by the interference of imagination: the imaginary elements help the narrating voice give the reader a closer view into the reality that is presented through the direct experience of the intellectual/detective. The main difference between *Petrolio* and *Gomorra* is exactly in this aspect, which implies heavy repercussions from the narrative point of view of characterization: Pasolini investigates the schemes of power by studying

⁵⁴ *Nandropausa* n. 10, 21/06/2006, www.wumingfoundation.com

documents, whereas Saviano describes the object of his inquiry from the inside. The most important consequence is the one affecting the narrating voice, which in both novels is put at the very center of the structure. Pasolini creates the figure of an author-investigator that, by describing the mechanisms of power, creates the literary work, and consequently shows the reader both procedures. On the other hand, Saviano appears in his role as author-witness who, by sharing his own direct experience, accompanies the reader through that terrible “viaggio nel sogno di dominio della camorra” that the subtitle of the book announces.

Both Pasolini and Saviano have elaborated effective narrative techniques in order to get the reader involved and interested not only in the stories told, but also in the way they are structured. For what concerns *Petrolio*, the most important device is the creation of what Carla Benedetti indicates as a “*forma-progetto*.” by making explicit the unfinished nature of the text, the author allows the reader to be put directly in front of the creation of the work. Pasolini appears to the reader as the glossator of two different stories: the story of how the narrative text is created and the story that such text contains. For this procedure to be effective, the traditional narrator has to disappear and give space to an author that becomes omnipresent. This is the original solution that Pasolini finds to the problem of how to eliminate the filter between himself and the audience: the book is the only thing that remains between author and reader. It is worth mentioning the words that Pasolini wrote in a never delivered letter to Alberto Moravia, words that make this intention extremely explicit:

Ho parlato al lettore in quanto io stesso, in carne e ossa, come scrivo a te questa lettera, o come spesso ho scritto le mie poesie in italiano. Ho

reso il romanzo oggetto tra il lettore e me, e ne ho discusso insieme (come si può fare da soli, scrivendo) (*Petrolio* 580).

It becomes natural to connect the considerations emerged thus far with a reflection on how to intend the role of the intellectual in relation to society, which is one of the main concerns emerging from the production of both the authors here discussed. Saviano tries, in a certainly different but not less effective way, to fill the space left void by the absence of Pasolini in the Italian literary discussion. Such absence has been lamented, among others, by Roberto Carnero in the introduction to his recent monographic work on Pasolini, *Morire per le idee* (2010). The differences between Pasolini and Saviano are more relevant if one considers them from the point of view of their method and style, but they do not affect what seems to be a common ideological approach to the role of the writer-intellectual in society. Let us observe the way that Saviano puts himself in relation to Pasolini: it appears clear how the Neapolitan writer accepts the inheritance of the committed/*engagé* intellectual and the responsibility to denounce the problems of reality, while he seems less interested in perpetrating a style from the strictly literary point of view. It is not accidental if what I propose here is a parallel between Saviano and only the final part of the production of Pasolini, the one that was more distinguished by a clear attack against Power and the people administering it. It is possible to summarize this aspect of the parallel between the authors with the words of Antonio Tricomi:

Saviano riconosce in Pasolini non un maestro di letteratura, ma un modello di intellettuale a cui rifarsi, implicitamente lamentando, più che l'assenza, nel presente, di libri del valore, diciamo, delle *Ceneri di*

Gramsci, quella di critici della cultura altrettanto radicali dell'estensore delle *Lettere luterane*. [...] La passione etica che mette Saviano sulle tracce di Pasolini assume però il valore specifico di un atto d'accusa contro la letteratura e l'intelligenza italiane dell'ultimo trentennio. Ci ricorda che, con poche eccezioni, gli esponenti delle generazioni successive a quella degli scrittori e degli intellettuali nati grosso modo tra le due guerre mondiali hanno gradatamente abbandonato ogni idea di letteratura e di cultura come beni pubblici da costruire per la comunità, con la comunità. (193)

From the point of view of the intellectual legacy, it is also important to highlight how *Gomorra* belongs to that specific tradition that is Neapolitan literature, and how some of the structural choices at the origin of this novel are certainly affected by similar works of the past. The creation that Saviano operates of an author who is also identifiable with the narrator and the main character in the novel is what makes *Gomorra* so original and challenges the reader to explore the boundaries between documented reality and fiction. Yet, the presence of an intellectual who walks in the streets of Naples and denounces the several problems of the city is not new in Neapolitan literature. This particular device of characterization has been deployed by some of the most representative authors in this tradition, in the attempt to identify the qualities that make this city peculiar if compared to the rest of Italy, and some of these distinguishing features can be interpreted as premonitory signs of the reality described in *Gomorra*.

For instance, when she wrote *Il mare non bagna Napoli* (1953), Anna Maria Ortese depicted a social environment whose primary characteristic was the passive acceptance of a destiny that could not be anything but negative. In order to represent this setting she created a narrator that, albeit not specifically a detective, is

an intellectual immersing herself in a reality made of characters living in the desperation that generates from the struggle to fulfill basic needs. It is the consequent sense of abandonment that makes the city seem so different, almost as a place existing on its own, left alone in a spiral of misery and hopelessness. In a certain way, the intellectual visiting an “archaic” society observes the impossibility of any kind of social improvement that is similar to what Captain Bellodi experiences when he arrives to Sicily in *Il giorno della civetta* (1961).⁵⁵ The lack of any positive expectation is represented through a passive acceptance of a sad destiny, dialectically rendered with the repetition of such sentences as *Lassa fà a Dio*, or *Dio sopra la piaga mette il sale*, which also reflect a contradictory relationship with faith: the supreme decision of God has to be trusted, but it also carries negative consequences for the same people already living in misery. If one considers that Naples is even represented as a place where children should ideally not wear eyeglasses, so that they would be spared the ugly reality around them, it is not surprising if such social problems have allowed organized crime to flourish in the way narrated in *Gomorra*.

While the condition of the intellectual emerging from *Gomorra* can be interpreted as a consequence of the abandonment and misery presented in *Il mare non bagna Napoli*, Ortese’s novel provides an even more important reference for Saviano. When, through the words of Pasquale Prunas, Ortese expresses the “diritto della cultura a sorvegliare lo Stato, qualsiasi Stato, a contenerlo invece che esserne contentuta” (114), she also remarks the role that intellectuals should play in not

⁵⁵ As remarked in the chapter on Sciascia, in the case of Bellodi the literary connection with a tradition of pessimism and misery could be established through a parallel with Giovanni Verga’s “Ciclo dei vinti.”

letting politicians and administrators free to rule over society without being considered responsible for their actions and decisions. Nevertheless, the narrating voice in *Il mare non bagna Napoli* does not exactly undertake the task of an investigation, but her condition is closer to that of an explorer: throughout the novel, she is more concerned with the description of an economically and culturally backward environment rather than with the analysis of the reasons why this setting has developed specific features.

Ortese's character is a local citizen who comes back years after she left Naples, and she now witnesses a reality that she cannot change. Similarly to what happens with the characters she encounters, the narrating voice expresses a pessimistic attitude, as she seems to accept the idea that the conditions of Naples are part of the very nature and destiny of the city, and they cannot be improved.

Saviano borrows from this novel the construction of a narrator who coincides with his own creator and is put directly inside the reality observed, but he adds the already mentioned and fundamental *performative* intention. His character actually believes that narrating represents the starting point for a positive end of the struggle against organized crime: this latter reflection finds confirmation in the several passages where the protagonist puts himself in correlation with Pasolini, but it can also be observed in the general attitude emerging from the novel. Especially the closing line of the novel remarks how Saviano considers the very existence of himself, the intellectual/detective, as a presence that the mob syndicates should perceive as a threatening force:

“Avevo voglia di urlare, volevo gridare, volevo stracciarmi i polmoni, come Papillon, con tutta la forza dello stomaco, spaccandomi la

trachea, con tutta la voce che la gola poteva ancora pompare:
«Maledetti bastardi, sono ancora vivo!»». (257)

Another significant intellectual legacy for Saviano comes from Giovanni Franchini's *L'abusivo* (2001), a book based on the story of how journalist Giancarlo Siani was murdered for implying, in an article published on «Il mattino,» that a Neapolitan clan had broken the behavioral code of camorra and betrayed another family. The narrator of this novel is arguably the closest predecessor of *Gomorra's* coincidence between author, narrator and main character. This element emerges with particular relevance when Franchini reflects on the role of the writer. By pointing out the responsibility that are implicit in the pact he seals with the reader, Franchini accepts as his primary duty the representation of reality without any filter:

Ma che cosa succede, mi chiedevo, se io dovessi scrivere della realtà perché questo è il mio compito, il mio dovere, ciò che un lettore si aspetta da me? Che succede se io devo informare, raccontare dando a ognuno il suo proprio, unico, inconfondibile nome? Che succede se mi devo esporre non potendo usare nessuno di quei poveri trucchi per velare la realtà di cui anche uno come me, pur utilizzandoli il meno possibile, comunque possiede un'ampia dotazione? Che cos'è questo esporsi con le proprie parole fino al rischio personale? (*L'abusivo* 96)

After all these considerations, it seems evident how Saviano, by accepting the legacy left by Pasolini and other authors of investigative novels, carries out the ultimate transformation of the figure of the intellectual as a detective. Leonardo Sciascia and the other authors I have discussed in the previous chapters suggested that particular episodes of Italian history presented the necessity, for the intellectuals, to question official sources of information and therefore turn themselves into detectives. Nevertheless, in the works of those authors the figure of the

intellectual/detective did not completely overlap with the actual author. For Saviano, the creation of a fictional figure embodying the values of culture in their connection with the quest for truth is no longer sufficient: the real-life intellectual becomes detective and, in his novel, he is direct witness and protagonist in the struggle of the Italian South against organized crime.

Gomorra provides the clearest example of an intellectual/investigator whose characterization is not limited to serving merely narrative goals, but is strictly functional to a leap from fiction to reality that puts the reader in front of more social and historical considerations. It is important to take into account how many of the writers discussed in my analysis, after an initial attempt to influence society through narrative fiction, have expressed negative feelings about this possibility. This pessimistic condition was clearly expressed by Sciascia and Eco, who both stated that the illusions of their youth had never found actual legitimation. Franchini himself remembers with nostalgia the time his category was made of people “convinti che il giornalismo fosse utile” (124), and dislikes the idea that “i giornalisti dovrebbero scrivere, non fare i poliziotti” (90).

If read from this point of view, *Gomorra* represents an important inversion of tendency in the way writers conceive their role in society: it is a new beginning that, by returning intellectuals to their function of social commitment, certainly anticipates interesting solutions for the future.

Conclusion

In my dissertation I have discussed the protagonists of several novels published from the sixties to today. Considering the peculiarities of each author in constructing fictional men of letters and their quest for truth, it has been possible to draw a precise line that follows the transformation of the character of the intellectual/detective through these decades.

The characters that I have analyzed all embody qualities connected to what American sociologist Charles Wright Mills defined in 1959 as *sociological imagination*, particularly when he remarked how the relationship between private biography and public history is closer than most people usually believe. In the words of Mills,

[...] in our time we have come to know that the limits of 'human nature' are frighteningly broad. We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove. (*The Sociological Imagination* 5-6)

Mills goes on by addressing the specific role of literature, and narrative fiction in particular, in the process that allows the diffusion of the sociological imagination:

[...] in literary work and in political analysis, the qualities of this imagination are regularly demanded. In a great variety of expressions,

they have become central features of intellectual endeavor and cultural sensibility. [...] Novelists – whose serious work embodies the most widespread definitions of human reality – frequently possess this imagination, and do much to meet the demand for it. By means of it, orientation to the present as history is sought. [...] It is a quality of mind that seems most dramatically to promise an understanding of the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities. (14)

The protagonists of the novels that I have studied embody this transition from individual experience to broader consequences reflected on society as a whole. With different levels of intensity, a personal undertaking of the search for truth often becomes part of an attempt to change the *status quo* that rules a community, and to reaffirm the intellectual approach as a tool to organize the investigation. To find the solution of a criminal case rarely is an ending *per se*, but it should be read in consideration of the implications and consequences that will be reflected on the setting of the novel.

This aspect is the main reason that convinced me to include in my research a more historical approach, not limiting my focus to a discussion exclusively focused on the structure of the novel. Rather than merely discussing *how* the character takes shape in the novel, it was important to understand *why* it is so often constructed as an intellectual/detective, and why real-life intellectuals have become interested in the fictional representation of themselves as investigators. Indeed, one of the most important conclusions of my dissertation is that the narrative construction of the character of intellectual/detective is functional to a series of reflections that intercept both the social and historical spheres, especially considering how the years that saw the publication of these novels dramatically changed Italian society.

A recurring aspect in the characterization of these fictional investigators is how they are often introduced by opposition with the setting of the novel, which inevitably leads to their status of isolated outsiders. This element is particularly strong in the novels of Leonardo Sciascia, where the peculiar relationship established between detective and society participates in the creation of quests for truth that fail to bring justice, even though the solution of a case is often revealed to the detective and the reader. Despite their efforts, diffidence prevails over Captain Bellodi, “uno di quei settentrionali pieni di pregiudizi” (*Il giorno della civetta* 410), and professor Laurana is perceived as an outsider much before the final definition of *cretino*. When the intellectual understands his condition of excluded from the rest of society, he turns his isolation into a weapon in the novels *Il contesto* and *Todo Modo* but, in the production of Sciascia, the victory of the intellectual/detective seems impossible to achieve, and this is a conviction that *Il cavaliere e la morte* reinforces.

In his recent *Leonardo Sciascia e la funzione sociale degli intellettuali* (2012), Joseph Francese has addressed the individualistic nature of Sciascia’s detectives. In this study on the controversial relationship that the Sicilian writer established with the intellectual and political institutions, Francese argues that most of the characters in the production of Sciascia reflect the same tendency to isolation that distinguished their creator. Francese supports the idea that their unbreakable conviction to stick with specific moral and behavioral principles, without adjusting to the necessities of the detection, is what inevitably prevents the characters from leading the investigation to a successful end.

The same condition of isolation returns, with different variations, in the other characters that I have analyzed. The *professore* of *Il giocatore invisibile* is constructed on the impossibility to communicate with the people surrounding him, while William of Baskerville is introduced as a threatening element for the *status quo* that reigns over the abbey and the library of *Il nome della rosa*. In the noir representation of the intellectual as a detective, the distance between men of letters and society becomes so strong that the characters take shape through a parodic absence of intellectual features, as it happens with Carlo Lucarelli's series of *Ispettore Coliandro*. Finally, the powerful image of the intellectual as a solitary witness of criminal activities is central to the way Pasolini denounces the *Palazzo* and to the journey that Roberto Saviano undertakes in order to uncover the mechanisms of organized crime: in both instances, the author/narrator/character stands alone while he witnesses the proliferation of injustice around him.

Precisely this recurrence of the isolated intellectual investigating crime is another bridge that connects the narrative construction of the character to the historical approach that I have proposed. It was compelling to focus on the reasons why so many Italian intellectuals have decided, through the last five decades, to represent themselves as fictional detectives. One possible answer is that, because of the progressive exclusion from the public discussion that our society has operated on intellectuals, they have found a liminal space between fiction and reality in order to continue their role of observers and critics: the isolation of the intellectual/detective is a narrative device that mirrors the condition of real-life intellectuals in Italy.

This conclusion is further justified if one considers the biographies of the writers that I have studied. The controversial relationship between writer and institutions has often brought such authors as Sciascia and Pasolini to a condition of isolation and open disagreement with their colleagues. In addition, the progressive loss of influence of the intellectual on society has been explicitly addressed in the words of several authors: Sciascia, Eco and Franchini have all remarked how, in the lapse of time of only one generation, writers have abandoned the illusion that the literary activity could be of any use for the solution of social problems. In 1979 Sciascia expressed his disillusionment with the following words, later re-published in *La palma va al nord* (1982): “Vent’anni fa credevo fosse possibile che il mondo cambiasse: ora non ci credo più” (159). Eco gave a similar account on how he conceived his identity as a writer, while explaining the premise behind *Il nome della rosa*:

Trascrivo senza preoccupazioni di attualità. Negli anni in cui scoprivo il testo dell’abate Vallet circolava la persuasione che si dovesse scrivere solo impegnandosi sul presente, e per cambiare il mondo. A dieci e più anni di distanza è ora consolazione dell’uomo di lettere (restituito alla sua altissima dignità) che si possa scrivere per puro amor di scrittura. (*Il nome della rosa* 12)

In addition, Antonio Franchini confessed his nostalgia for the years when journalists as a category were “convinti che il giornalismo fosse utile” (*L’abusivo* 124). If compared to the preceding points of view, the conviction in the possibility to use the written expression in a *performative* way, so strong in *Gomorra*, can be seen

as a positive inversion of tendency that certainly promises interesting future developments.⁵⁶

The generally pessimistic attitude regarding the influence of literature on real life participates in the creation of characters moved by a tendency on isolating themselves as a result of their own decision, not merely because of the hostility of the setting and the other characters. The intellectual as a detective very often lives in a world of his own, in a reality made of books, of the topics of which he is a specialist and a consequently legitimate critic: one of the most common accusations that these characters receive is related to their impossibility to distinguish reality from fiction. The opposition between an intellectual versus a more practical approach to detection has become one of the matters to address in the characters that I have discussed. Particularly in the figure of Captain Bellodi, the intention to undertake an investigation based on an intellectual premise becomes naive conviction that leads the detective to defeat. At the same time, the anonymous professor at the center of *// giocatore invisibile* wants to solve his case by solely deploying his philological skills, completely ignoring the psychological implications that need to be considered if one wants to lead a successful investigation.

This tendency to disclose the self-referentiality of literature has proved extremely strong in the investigations led by intellectuals. Not only Pontiggia, but also Umberto Eco have created examples of narrative fiction that are deeply rooted in the tradition of literature referring to itself, with the interesting possibility to remark

⁵⁶ The relationship between intellectual and society is a broad field of discussion, certainly not limited to the authors here analyzed. Throughout the dissertation it was possible to mention how some of the most respected scholars have addressed the increasing loss of influence of men of letters on reality. For example, both Alberto Asor Rosa and Remo Ceserani have reflected on the changing condition of intellectuals in Italy, and on the progressive disappearance of the traditional *Maître à penser*.

a correspondence between the several stages of the detection and the fictional world of literature in which books are protagonists.⁵⁷ The plot often develops from the sudden apparition of a written text, and this device also establishes a connection with the tradition of the gothic novel: it happens with the mysterious letters that start the investigations of *A ciascuno il suo* and *Il giocatore invisibile*, as well as the manuscript that (allegedly) provides the origin of the narration of Adso of Melk in *Il nome della rosa*. The attempt to transform words into useful tools often grants them a relevant role as parts of the investigation: written texts become the reason to commit a crime, the weapon through which the crime is executed, the evidence that leads the investigation and the means to successfully finish it.

When success is reached from the intellectual point of view, the person responsible for a crime is found, but knowledge does not necessarily bring justice: the Italian intellectual/detective becomes part of the tradition of the anti-detective novel, in which the typical expectations of the investigative sub-genre are not respected. In line with this aspect, the end of the novel does not see the criminal pay for breaking the rules of society. Again, justice is only reached on a theoretical level, where knowledge cannot influence the facts of real life. Almost all the characters in the production of Sciascia arrive at the correct conclusion of a case, but they have to stop in front of the impossibility to take the step necessary to go from theory to

⁵⁷ This tendency to metaliterary references is even more meaningful if one remembers how Sciascia, Pontiggia and Eco all demonstrated interest for the production of Jorge Luis Borges, one of the masters of the self-referentiality of literature. Sciascia wrote several essays on Borges, met the Argentinian writer in Rome and defined him “uno dei più interessanti scrittori d’oggi” (*Le «invenzioni» di Borges* 92). Pontiggia argued that Borges should be given the honor of receiving a Nobel Prize for Literature (*Il dio ignoto della letteratura fantastica* 693). Eco used him as a model for the creation of Jorge of Burgos, also borrowing the use of mirrors and of an extraordinarily vast library in *Il nome della rosa*.

practice. William of Baskerville shares the same condition: he successfully arrives at the conclusion of his investigation, but loses the evidence/book in the fire at the library. In *Il nome della rosa*, death means victory: Jorge of Burgos prevails on his opponent by sacrificing his own life in order to maintain the book of Aristotle inaccessible, so that William's truth cannot be supported by any evidence. This time, the character representing the self-referentiality of the literary institution works against the detective, whose investigative accomplishment cannot be shared. Nevertheless, the recollection of the events recorded by Adso of Melk seems to reinforce the position of the intellectual as a witness: even though the book of Aristotle is lost, the very existence of William and Adso make them reliable keepers of the truth.

The impossibility to prove the validity of one's discoveries is another element that these characters share: it is the same condition that Pasolini lamented ("Io so, ma non ho le prove") in his famous article "Che cos'è questo golpe?", in which he openly declared that many of the criminal deeds observed in Italy during the *strategia della tensione* have been covered up for lack of evidence and for the convenience of the people who administer Power. Even from this standpoint, the leap from narrative to history in *Petrolio* and *Gomorra* is evident, and the whole reflection on the intellectual features of fictional detectives evidently participates in this process.

Although they often narrate the defeat of this conviction, the authors here discussed originally believed in the possibility for the intellectual to be a protagonist of society, and an invitation to serious commitment can be read in the destiny

reserved for their characters. Despite their sincere intention to work for the good of the community, they are overcome because the already mentioned tendency to live in a parallel dimension made of books prevents them from affecting the *status quo* that they fight. Especially the reference to the leaden year offers the possibility to reflect on the intellectual/detective and the attempt to reconsider part of the recent Italian history, shedding light on some of the obscure events that have often been manipulated by the institutions. In this sense, the characters participate in the shaping of a renewed and more conscious cultural memory, in a process through which many historical events can still find the legitimate solution they are missing: once again, the connection between the construction of the characters and specific social implications emerges with evidence.

The intellectual as a detective is caught in a short circuit regarding his public function and the relationship with the surrounding environment. These characters represent men of letters whose sincere desire to positively affect society is prevented by society itself, and this aspect makes the consequent detachment and tendency to isolation understandable. At the same time, their creators seem to suggest that such surrender is the denial of the correct interpretation of the role of the intellectual, and this is the reason why they “punish” their own characters by allowing them an intellectual victory that is not sufficient to influence the setting of the novel.

This use of characterization as a tool for a discussion of social implications is the device through which the authors of crime fiction have found a reasonable compromise between the artistic value of a novel and its commercial success.

Particularly in regard to Pontiggia's *professore* and Eco's William of Baskerville, the fictional intellectual is part of that process that Gian Carlo Ferretti described as *compromesso alto*: two authors typically associated with a *high-brow* idea of literature, who distinguished themselves as fine scholars of philology and semiotics, were able to create novels that critics and common readers could equally appreciate. According to Ferretti, the *best-seller medio di qualità*, so popular in the sixties and the seventies, lost its appeal particularly because it was based on a closed circle of authors addressing a limited number of readers. In the eighties this form gave way to a new wave of novels that, although still compromising with the editorial necessity to sell as many copies as possible, were doing so on the premise of a more researched artistic achievement. The consequences on the intellectual as a detective are extremely important: if in the past there was space for such characters as professor Laurana, who conceived the investigation as a mere pastime, the quest for truth becomes in *Il nome della rosa* the combination of intellectual pleasure and a strong sense of duty. While the protagonist denotes a sincere passion for learning and discovering new things, he never allows this aspect to overshadow the main goal, which is the solution of the case as matter of justice that *must* be accomplished. Baskerville carries throughout the novel the supreme importance of the mission he has received, and this element evidently reflects serious implications on the function of culture and real-life intellectuals that Ferretti points out:

Il motivo comunque, che più di ogni altro consente questi accostamenti di esperienze, da Pontiggia a Calvino, da Eco a Saltini, è quello dei diversi modi di intendere la condizione dell'intellettuale e il senso dello scrivere, e leggere, oggi: in un nesso di problemi che si arricchisce via

via di sempre nuove implicazioni e contraddizioni, tra testo e mercato, e viceversa. (*Il best seller all'italiana* 63)

The simultaneous value of the investigation as intellectual pleasure and as a duty is further addressed in *Il best seller all'italiana*, along with a reflection on the “revolutionary” implications of the erudite approach to detection:

In questo senso appare già interessante, in Guglielmo, quella contraddizione tra piacere intellettuale e dovere del ruolo (che poi tende appunto a invertirsi come in un chiasmo: dovere intellettuale e piacere del ruolo); e più precisamente, in Eco, tra «puro amor di scrittura», rifiuto del «presente» e dell'«attualità», e ritornante gioco di allusioni alle vicende politiche di questi anni (terrorismo, crisi della società, album di famiglia, e così via). [...] Circola infatti vivacemente e ariosamente nel romanzo (e in Guglielmo e in Eco) una ragione ironica, che rivaluta in modo esplicito la carica eminentemente critica e dissacratoria del «riso»; una ragione sperimentale, priva di certezze acquisite, trasgressiva dell'«ordine» apparente o imposto; e quindi una letteratura come spedizione nel possibile e nell'imprevedibile, come indagine dentro il reale «disordine», come accrescimento di conoscenze parziali ma inedite, come continua rimessa in gioco del linguaggio; un modo insomma di intendere la crisi della ragione come crisi di ogni suo successivo traguardo e conquista, all'interno di un processo ininterrotto. (65-69)

The most recent transformation of the character, operated by Roberto Saviano, re-establishes the centrality of the investigation fulfilled as an intellectual duty, which is an aspect that I have connected to the legacy received from Pasolini. The recurring correspondence between the narrative construction of the intellectual as a detective and the notion of social commitment establishes for the character an active function in the shaping and preservation of a shared cultural memory for the Nation. Italian crime fiction becomes even more relevant if one considers the many controversial historical events that, from the *dopoguerra* to today, have only been partially explained. The persistence of two parallel forms of truth, one official/judiciary and the other historical, calls for the involvement of the intellectual in

the re-discussion of the past and the Italian identity. As Marta Forno points out with particular regard for the years of the *strategia della tensione*, “sono state sì raggiunte delle verità giudiziarie ma che legittimamente lasciano il dubbio che coincidano con quelle storiche” (149).

The real-life coexistence of these two different truths is another, fundamental bridge connecting novel and reality, because it corresponds in fiction to the opposition between the *intellectual* solution of the investigation and the impossibility for the character to share this success. In the works of Sciascia, this duality is particularly felt in *A ciascuno il suo*: what people know differs from what they are willing to admit and officially record, and the intellectual/detective has to die because he insinuates the risk of a short-circuit in this mentality. In *Il nome della rosa*, the discovery of truth is an intellectual victory that leaves the detective defeated from the practical point of view. While William and Adso survive to tell the story of their discovery, they are doomed by the impossibility to provide actual evidence for it. The restlessness expressed by Pasolini, a real-life intellectual/detective himself whose assassination was probably connected to his investigations, is left as a legacy to Saviano, who becomes the protagonist of his own novel.

These reflections summarize the reasons why, in response to the increasing isolation that society perpetrates on them, Italian intellectuals have felt the need to turn into real and fictional detectives. The character of the intellectual as a detective carries the value of a truth that, for the good of society, should not be lost, as it provides alternative views in opposition to the often deficient and manipulated official history.

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